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A TOUCH OF SUN
AND OTHER STORIES

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BY

MARY HALLOCK FOOTE

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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A TOUCH OF SUN

A TOUCH OF SUN

I

The five-o'clock whistle droned through the heat. Its deep, consequential chest-note belonged by right to the oldest and best paying member of the Asgard group, a famous mining property of northern California.

The Asgard Company owned a square league of prehistoric titles on the western slope of the foot-hills, — land enough for the preservation of a natural park within its own boundaries where fire-lines were cleared, forest-trees respected, and roads kept up. Wherever the company erected a board fence, gate, or building, the same was methodically painted a color known as "monopoly brown." The most conspicuous of these objects cropped out on the sunset dip of the property where the woods for twenty years had been cut, and the Sacramento valley surges up in heat and glare, with yearly visitations of malaria.

Higher than the buildings in brown, a gray-

shingled bungalow ranged itself on the lap of its broad lawns against a slope of orchard tops climbing to the dark environment of the forest. Not the original forest: of that only three stark pines were left, which rose one hundred feet out of a gulch below the house and lent their ancient majesty to the modern uses of electric wires and telephone lines. Their dreaming tops were in the sky; their feet were in the sluicings of the stamp-mill that reared its long brown back in a semi-recumbent posture, resting one elbow on the hill; and beneath the valley smouldered, a pale mirage by day, by night a vision of color transcendent and rich as the gates of the Eternal City.

At half past five the night watchman, on his way from town, stopped at the superintendent's gate, ran up the blazing path, and thrust a newspaper between the dark blue canvas curtains that shaded the entrance of the porch. For hours the house had slept behind its heat defenses, every shutter closed, yards of piazza blind and canvas awning fastened down. The sun, a ball of fire, went slowly down the west. Rose-vines drooped against the hanging lattices, printing their watery lines of split bamboo with a shadow-pattern of leaf and flower.

The whole house-front was decked with dead roses, or roses blasted in full bloom, as if to celebrate with appropriate insignia the passing of the hottest day of the year.

Half-way down the steps the watchman stopped, surprised by a voice from behind the curtains. He came back in answer to his name.

A thin white hand parted the curtain an inch or two. There was the flicker of a fan held against the light.

"Oh, Hughson, will you tell Mr. Thorne that I am here? He does n't know I have come."

"Tell him that Mrs. Thorne is home?" the man translated slowly.

"Yes. He does not expect me. You will tell him at once, please?"

"Yes, ma'am."

The curtain was fastened again from inside. A woman's step went restlessly up and down, up and down the long piazza floors, now muffled on a rug, now light on a matting, or distinct on the bare boards.

Later a soft Oriental voice inquired, "Wha' time Missa Tho'ne wanta dinna?"

"The usual time, Ito," came the answer; "make no difference for me."

"Lika tea — coffee — after dinna?"

"Tea — iced. Have you some now? Oh, bring it, please!"

After an interval: "Has Mr. Thorne been pretty well?"

"I think."

"It is very hot. How is your kitchen — any better than it was?"

"Missa Tho'ne fixa more screen; all open now, thank you."

"Take these things into my dressing-room. No; there will be no trunk. I shall go back in a few days."

The gate clashed to. A stout man in a blaze of white duck came up the path, lifting his cork helmet slightly to air the top of his head. As he approached it could be seen that his duck was of a modified whiteness, and that his beard, even in that forcing weather, could not be less than a two days' growth. He threw his entire weight on the steps one by one, as he mounted them slowly. The curtains were parted for him from within.

"Well, Margaret?"

"Well, dear old man! How hot you look! *Why* do you not carry an umbrella?"

"Because I have n't got you here to make

me. What brought you back in such weather? Where is your telegram?"

"I did not telegraph. There was no need. I simply had to speak to you at once — about something that could not be written."

"Well, it 's good to have a look at you again. But you are going straight back, you know. Can't take any chances on such weather as this."

Mr. Thorne sank copiously into a piazza chair, and pulled forward another for his wife.

She sat on the edge of it, smiling at him with wistful satisfaction. Her profile had a delicate, bird-like slant. Pale, crisped auburn hair powdered with gray, hair that looked like burnt-out ashes, she wore swept back from a small, tense face, full of fine lines and fleeting expressions. She had taken off her high, close neckwear, and the wanness of her throat showed above a collarless shirt-waist.

"Don't look at me; I am a wreck!" she implored, with a little exhausted laugh. "I wonder where my keys are? I must get on something cool before dinner."

"Ito has all the keys somewhere. Ito 's a gentleman. He takes beautiful care of me, only

he won't let me drink as much *shasta* as I want. What is that? Iced tea? Bad, bad before dinner! I 'm going to watch *you* now. You are not looking a bit well. Is there any of that decoction left? Well, it *is* bad; gets on the nerves, too much of it. The problem of existence here is, What shall we drink, and how much of it *can* we drink?"

Mrs. Thorne laughed out a little sigh. "I have brought you a problem. But we will talk when it is cooler. Don't you — don't you shave but twice a week when I am away, Henry?"

"I shave every day, when I think of it. I never go anywhere, and I don't have anybody here if I can possibly avoid it. It is all a man can do to live and be up to his work."

"I know; it 's frightful to work in such weather. How the mill roars! It starts the blood to hear it. Last spring it sounded like a cataract; now it roars like heat behind furnace doors. Which is your room now?"

"O Lord! I sleep anywhere; begin in my bed generally and end on the piazza floor. It will be the grass if this keeps on."

Mrs. Thorne continued to laugh spasmodically at her husband's careless speeches, not at what he said so much as through content in

his familiar way of saying things. Under their light household talk, graver, questioning looks were exchanged, the unappeased glances of friends long separated, who realize on meeting again that letters have told them nothing.

"Why did n't you write me about this terrible heat?"

"Why did n't you write *me* that you were not well?"

"I am well."

"You don't look it — anything but."

"I am always ghastly after a journey. It is n't a question of health that brought me. But — never mind. Ring for Ito, will you? I want my keys."

At dinner she looked ten years younger, sitting opposite him in her summery lawns and laces. She tasted the cold wine soup, but ate nothing, watching her husband's appetite with the mixed wonder and concern that thirty years' knowledge of its capacities had not diminished. He studied her face meanwhile; he was accustomed to reading faces, and hers he knew by line and precept. He listened to her choked little laughs and hurried speeches. All her talk was mere postponement; she was fighting for time. Hence he argued that the trouble

which had sent her flying home to him from the mountains was not fancy-bred. Of her imaginary troubles she was ready enough to speak.

The moon had risen, a red, dry-weather moon, when they walked out into the garden and climbed the slope under low orchard boughs. The trees were young, too quickly grown; like child mothers, they had lost their natural symmetry, overburdened with hasty fruition. Each slender parent trunk was the centre of a host of artificial props, which saved the sinking boughs from breaking. Under one of these low green tents they stopped and handled the great fruit that fell at a touch.

"How everything rushes to maturity here! The roses blossom and wither the same hour. The peaches burst before they ripen. Don't you think it oppresses one, all this waste fertility, such an excess of life and good living, one season crowding upon another? How shall we get rid of all these kindly fruits of the earth?"

She did not wait for an answer to her morbid questions. They moved on up a path between hedges of sweet peas going to seed, and blackberry-vines covered with knots of fruit

dried in their own juices. A wall of gigantic Southern cane hid the boundary fence, and above it the night-black pines of the forest towered, their breezy monotone answering the roar of the hundred stamps below the hill.

A few young pines stood apart on a knoll, a later extension of the garden, ungraded and covered with pine-needles. In the hollow places native shrubs, surprised by irrigation, had made an unwonted summer's growth.

Here, in the blanching moon, stood a tent with both flaps thrown back. A wind of coolness drew across the hill; it lifted one of the tent-curtains mysteriously; its touch was sad and searching.

Mrs. Thorne put back the canvas and stepped inside. She saw a folding camp-cot stripped of bedding, a dresser with half-open drawers that disclosed emptiness, a dusty book-rack standing on the floor. The little mirror on the tent-pole, hung too high for her own reflection, held a darkling picture of a pine-bough against a patch of stars. She sat on the edge of the cot and picked up a discarded necktie, sawing it across her knee mechanically to free it from the dust. Her husband placed himself beside her. His weight brought down

the mattress and rocked her against his shoulder; he put his arm around her, and she gave way to a little sob.

"When has he written to you?" she asked. "Since he went down?"

"I think so. Let me see! When did you hear last?"

"I have brought his last letter with me. I wondered if he had told you."

"I have heard nothing — nothing in particular. What is it?"

"The inevitable woman."

"She has come at last, has she? Come to stay?"

"He is engaged to her."

Mr. Thorne breathed his astonishment in a low whistle. "You don't like it?" he surmised at once.

"Like it! If it were merely a question of liking! She is impossible. She knows it, her people know it, and they have not told him. It remains"—

"What is the girl's name?"

"Henry, she is not a girl! That is, she is a girl forced into premature womanhood, like all the fruits of this hotbed climate. She is that Miss Benedet whom you helped, whom

you saved — how many years ago? When Willy was a schoolboy."

"Well, she *was* saved, presumably."

"Saved from what, and by a total stranger!"

"She made no mistake in selecting the stranger. I can testify to that; and she was as young as he, my dear."

"A girl is never as young as a boy of the same age. She is a woman now, and she has taken his all — everything a man can give to his first — and told him nothing!"

"Are you sure it 's the same girl? There are other Benedets."

"She is the one. His letter fixes it beyond a question — so innocently he fastens her past upon her! And he says, 'She is "a woman like a dewdrop." ' I wonder if he knows what he is quoting, and what had happened to *that* woman!"

"Dewdrops don't linger long in the sun of California. But she was undeniably the most beautiful creature this or any other sun ever shone on."

"And he is the sweetest, sanest, cleanest-hearted boy, and the most innocent of what a woman may go through and still be fair outside!"

"Why, that is why she likes him. It speaks well for her, I think, that she hankers after that kind of a boy."

"It speaks volumes for what she lacks herself! Don't misunderstand me. I hope I am not without charity for what is done and never can be undone, — though charity is hardly the virtue one would hope to need in welcoming a son's wife. It is her ghastly silence now that condemns her."

Mr. Thorne heaved a sigh, and changed his feet on the gritty tent floor. He stooped and picked up some small object on which he had stepped, a collar-stud trodden flat. He rolled it in his fingers musingly.

"She may be getting up her courage to tell him in her own time and way."

"The time has gone by when she could have told him honorably. She should have stopped the very first word on his lips."

"She could n't do that, you know, and be human. She could n't be expected to spare him at such a cost as that. Mighty few men would be worth it."

"If he was n't worth it she could have let him go. And the family! Think of their accepting his proposal in silence. Why, can they

even be married, Henry, without some process of law?"

"Heaven knows! I don't know how far the other thing had gone — far enough to make questions awkward."

Husband and wife remained seated side by side on the son's deserted bed. The shape of each was disconsolately outlined to the other against the tent's illumined walls. Now a wind-swayed branch of manzanita rasped the canvas, and cast upon it shadows of its moving leaves.

"It 's pretty rough on quiet old folks like us, with no money to get us into trouble," said Mr. Thorne. "The boy is not a beauty, he 's not a swell. He is just a plain, honest boy with a good working education. If you judge a woman, as some say you can, by her choice of men, she should n't be very far out of the way."

"It is very certain you cannot judge a man by his choice of women."

"You cannot judge a boy by the women that get hold of him. But Willy is not such a babe as you think. He 's a deuced quiet sort, but he 's not been knocking around by himself these ten years, at school and college

and vacations, without picking up an idea or two — possibly about women. Experience, I grant, he probably lacks ; but he has the true-bred instinct. We always have trusted him so far ; I 'm willing to trust him now. If there are things he ought to know about this woman, leave him to find them out for himself."

" After he has married her ! And you don't even know whether a marriage is possible without some sort of shuffling or concealment ; do you ? "

" I don't, but they probably do. Her family are n't going to get themselves into that kind of a scrape."

" I have no opinion whatever of the family. I think they would accept any kind of a compromise that money can buy."

" Very likely, and so would we if we had a daughter " —

" Why, we *have* a daughter ! It is our daughter, all the daughter we shall ever call ours, that you are talking about. And to think of the girls and girls he might have had ! Lovely girls, without a flaw — a flaw ! She will fall to pieces in his hand. She is like a broken vase put together and set on the shelf to look at."

"Now we are losing our sense of proportion. We must sleep on this, or it will blot out the whole universe for us."

"It has already for me. I have n't a shadow of faith in anything left."

"And I have n't read the paper. Suppose the boy were in Cuba now!"

"I wish he were! It is a judgment on me for wanting to save him up, for insisting that the call was not for him."

"That 's just it, you see. You have to trust a man to know his own call. Whether it 's love or war, he is the one who has got to answer."

"But you will write to him to-morrow, Henry? He must be saved, if the truth can save him. Think of the awakening!"

"My dear, if he loves her there will be no awakening. If there is, he will have to take his dose like other men. There is nothing in the truth that can save him, though I agree with you that he ought to know it — from her."

"If you had only told her your name, Henry! Then she would have had a finger-post to warn her off our ground. To think what you did for her, and how you are repaid!"

"It was a very foolish thing I did for her; I was n't proud of it. That was one reason why I did not tell her my name."

Mr. Thorne removed his weight from the cot. The warped wires twanged back into place.

"Come, Maggie, we are too old not to trust in the Lord — or something. Anyhow, it 's cooler. I believe we shall sleep to-night."

"And have n't I murdered sleep for you, you poor old man? What a thing it is to have nerve and no nerves! I know you feel just as wrecked as I do. I wish you would say so. I want it said to the uttermost. If I could but — our only boy — our boy of 'highest hopes'! You remember the dear old Latin words in his first 'testimonials'?"

"They must have been badly disappointed in their girl, and I suppose they had their 'hopes,' too."

"They should not drag another into the pit, one too innocent to have imagined such treachery."

"I would n't make too much of his innocence. He is all right so far as we know; he 's got precious little excuse for not being: but there is no such gulf between any two

young humans; there can't be, especially when one is a man. Take my hand. There 's a step there."

Two shapes in white, with shadows preposterously lengthening, went down the hill. The long, dark house was open now to the night.

There is no night in the "stilly" sense at a mine.

The mill glared through all its windows from the gulch. Sentinel lights kept watch on top. The hundred stamps pounded on. If they ceased a moment, there followed the sob of the pump, or the clang of a truck-load of drills dumped on the floor of the hoisting-works, or the thunder of rock in the iron-bound ore-bins. All was silence on the hill; but a wakeful figure wrapped in white went up and down the empty porches, light as a dead leaf on the wind. It was the mother, wasting her night in grievous thinking, sighing with weariness, pining for sleep, dreading the day. How should they presume to tell that woman's story, knowing her only through one morbid chapter of her earliest youth, which they had stumbled upon without the key to it, or any knowledge of its sequel? She longed

to feel that they might be merciful and not tell it. She coveted happiness for her son, and in her heart was prepared for almost any surrender that would purchase it for him. If the lure were not so great! If the woman were not so blinding fair, why, then one might find a virtue in excusing her, in condoning her silence, even. But, clothed in that power, to have pretended innocence as well!

The roar of the stamp-heads deadened her hearing of the night's subtler noises. Her thoughts went grinding on, crushing the hard rock of circumstance, but incapable of picking out the grains of gold therein. Later siftings might discover them, but she was reasoning now under too great human pressure for delicate analysis.

She saw the planets set and the night-mist cloak the valley. By four o'clock daybreak had put out the stars. She went to her room then and fell asleep, awakening after the heat had begun, when the house was again darkened for the day's siege.

She was still postponing, wandering through the darkened rooms, peering into closets and bureau drawers to see, from force of habit, how Ito discharged his trust.

At luncheon she asked her husband if he had written. He made a gesture expressing his sense of the hopelessness of the situation in general.

"You know how I came by my knowledge, and how little it amounts to as a question of facts."

"Henry, how can you trifle so! You believe, just as I do, that such facts would wreck any marriage. And you are not the only one who knows them. I think your knowledge was providentially given you for the saving of your son."

"My son is a man. *I* can't save him. And take my word for it, he will go all lengths now before he will be saved."

"Let him go, then, with his eyes open, not blindfold, in jeopardy of other men's tongues."

Mr. Thorne rose uneasily.

"Do as you think you must; but it rather seems to me that I am bound to respect that woman's secret."

"You wish that you had not told me."

"Well, I have, and I suppose that was part of the providence. It is in your hands now; be as easy on her as you can."

With a view to being "easy," Mrs. Thorne

resolved not to expatiate, but to give the story on plain lines. The result was hardly as merciful as might have been expected.

"DEAR WILLY," she wrote: "Prepare yourself for a most unhappy letter [what woman can forego her preface?] — unhappy mother that I am, to have such a message laid upon me. But you will understand when you have read why the cup may not pass from us. If ever again a father or a mother can help you, my son, you have us always here, poor in comfort though we are. It seems that the comforters of our childhood have little power over those hurts that come with strength of years.

"Seven years ago this summer your father went to the city on one of his usual trips. Everything was usual, except that at Colfax he noticed a pair of beautiful thoroughbred horses being worked over by the stablemen, and a young fellow standing by giving directions. The horses had been overridden in the heat. It was such weather as we are having now. The young man, who appeared to have everything to say about them, was of the country sporting type, distinctly not the gentleman. In a cattle country he would have been

a cowboy simply. Your father thought he might have been employed on some of the horse-breeding ranches below Auburn as a trainer of young stock. He even wondered if he could have stolen the animals.

"But as the train moved out it appeared he had appropriated something of greater value — a young girl, also a thoroughbred.

"It did not need the gossip of the train-hands to suggest that this was an elopement of a highly sensational kind. Father was indignant at the jokes. You know it is a saying with the common sort of people that in California elopements become epidemic at certain seasons of the year — like earthquake shocks or malaria. The man was handsome in a primitive way — worlds beneath the girl, who was simply and tragically a lady. Father sat in the same car with them, opposite their section. It grew upon him by degrees that she was slowly awakening, as one who has been drugged, to a stupefied consciousness of her situation. He thought there might still be room for help at the crisis of her return to reason (I mean all this in a spiritual sense), and so he kept near them. They talked but little together. The girl seemed stunned, as I say,

by physical exhaustion or that dawning comprehension in which your father fancied he recognized the tragic element of the situation.

"The young man was outwardly self-possessed, as horsemen are, but he seemed constrained with the girl. They had no conversation, no topics in common. He kept his place beside her, often watching her in silence, but he did not obtrude himself. She appeared to have a certain power over him, even in her helplessness, but it was slipping from her. In her eyes, as they rested upon him in the hot daylight, your father believed that he saw a wild and gathering repulsion. So he kept near them.

"The train was late, having waited at Colfax two hours for the Eastern Overland, else they would have been left, those two, and your father — but such is fate!

"It was ten o'clock when they reached Oakland. He lost the pair for a moment in the crowd going aboard the boat, but saw the girl again far forward, standing alone by the rail. He strolled across the deck, not appearing to have seen her. She moved a trifle nearer; with her eyes on the water, speaking low as if to herself, she said: —

"'I am in great danger. Will you help me? If you will, listen, but do not speak or come any nearer. Be first, if you can, to go ashore; have a carriage ready, and wait until you see me. There will be a moment, perhaps — only a moment. Do not lose it. You understand? *He*, too, will have to get a carriage. When he comes for me I shall be gone. Tell the driver to take me to —' she gave the number of a well-known residence on Van Ness Avenue.

"He looked at her then, and said quietly, 'The Benedet house is closed for the summer.'

"She hung her head at the name. 'Promise me your silence!' she implored in the same low, careful voice.

"'I will protect you in every way consistent with common sense,' your father answered, 'but I make no promises.'

"'I am at your mercy,' she said, and added, 'but not more than at his.'

"'Is this a case of conspiracy or violence?' your father asked.

"She shook her head. 'I cannot accuse him. I came of my own free will. That is why I am helpless now.'

"'I do not see how I can help you,' said father.

"'You can help me to gain time. One hour is all I ask. Will you or not?' she said. 'Be quick! He is coming.'

"'I must go with you, then,' your father answered, 'I will take you to this address, but I need not tell you the house is empty.'

"'There are people in the coachman's lodge,' she answered. Then her companion approached, and no more was said.

"But the counter-elopement was accomplished as only your father could manage such a matter on the spur of the moment — consequences accepted with his usual philosophy and bonhomie. If he could have foreseen *all* the consequences, he would not, I think, have refused to give her his name.

"He left her at the side entrance, where she rang and was admitted by an oldish, respectable looking man, who recognized her evidently with the greatest surprise. Then your father carried out her final order to wire Norwood Benedet, Jr., at Burlingame, to come home that night to the house address and save — she did not say whom or what; there she broke off, demanding that your father

compose a message that should bring him as sure as life and death, but tell no tales. I do not know how she may have put it — these are my own words.

"There was a paragraph in one newspaper, next morning, which gave the girl's full name, and a fancy sketch of her elopement with the famous range-rider Dick Malaby. This was just after the close of the cattlemen's war in Wyoming. Malaby had fought for one of the ruined English companies. (The big owners lost everything, as you know. The country was up in arms against them; they could not protect their own men.) Malaby's employers were friends of the Benedets, and had asked a place with them for their liegeman. He was a desperado with a dozen lives upon his head, but men like Norwood Benedet and his set would have been sure to make a pet of him. One could see how it all had come about, and what a terrible publicity such a name associated with hers would give a girl for the rest of her life.

"But money can do a great deal. Society was out of town; the newspapers that society reads were silent.

"It was announced a few days later that

Mrs. Benedet and her daughter Helen had gone East on their way to Europe. As Mr. Benedet's health was very bad, — this was only six months before he died, — society wondered; but it has been accustomed to wondering about the Benedets.

"Mrs. Benedet came home at the time of her husband's death and remained for a few months, but Helen was kept away. You know they have continually been abroad for the last seven years, and Helen has never been seen in society here. When you spoke of 'Miss Benedet' I no more thought of her than if she had not been living. Aunt Frances met them last winter at Cannes, and Mrs. Benedet said positively that they had no intention of coming back to California ever to live. Aunt Frances wondered why, with their beautiful homes empty and going to destruction. I have told you the probable reason. Whether it still exists, God knows — or what they have done with that man and his dreadful knowledge.

"Helen Benedet may have changed her spiritual identity since she made that fatal journey, but she can hardly have forgotten what she did. She must know there is a man

who, if he lives, holds her reputation at the mercy of his silence. Money can do a great deal, but it cannot do everything.

"I am tempted to wish that we — your father and I — could share your ignorance, could trust as you do. Better a common awakening for us all, than that I should be the one necessity has chosen to apply the torture to my son.

"The misery of this will make you hate my handwriting forever. But why do I babble? You do not hear me. God help you, my dear!"

These words, descriptive of her own emotions, Mrs. Thorne on re-reading scored out, and copied the last page.

She did not weep. She ached from the impossibility of weeping. She stumbled away from her desk, tripping in her long robes, and stretched herself out at full length on the floor, like a girl in the first embrace of sorrow. But hearing Ito's footsteps, she rose ashamed, and took an attitude befitting her years.

The letter was absently sealed and addressed; there was no reason why the shaft should not go home. Yet she hesitated. It

were better that she should read it to her husband first.

The sun dropped below the piazza roof and pierced the bamboo lattices with lines and slits of fervid light.

"From heat to heat the day declined."

The gardener came with wet sacking and swathed the black-glazed jardinières, in which the earth was steaming. The mine whistle blared, and a rattle of miners' carts followed, as the day-shift dispersed to town. The mine did not board its proletariate. At his usual hour the watchman braved the blinding path, and left the evening paper on the piazza floor. There it lay unopened. Mrs. Thorne fanned herself and looked at it. There must be fighting in Cuba; she did not move to see. Other mothers' sons were dying; what was death to such squalor as hers? Sorrow is a queen, as the poet says, and sits enthroned; but Trouble is a slave. Mothers with griefs like hers must suffer in the fetters of silence.

When dinner was over, Ito made his nightly pilgrimage through the house, opening bedroom shutters, fastening curtains back. He drew up the piazza-blinds, and like a stage-

scene, framed in post and balustrade, and bordered with a tracery of rose-vines, the valley burst upon the view. Its cool twilight colors, its river-bed of mist, added to the depth of distance. Against it the white roses looked whiter, and the pink ones caught fire from the intense, great afterglow.

The silent couple, drinking their coffee outside, drew a long mutual sigh.

"Every day," said Mrs. Thorne, "we wonder why we stay in such a place, and every evening we are cajoled into thinking there never can be such another day. And the beauty is just as fresh every night as the heat is preposterous by day."

"It's a great strain on the men," said Mr. Thorne. "We lost two of our best hands this week — threw down their tools and quit, for some tomfoolery they would n't have noticed a month ago. The bosses irritate the men, and the men get fighting mad in a minute. Not one of them will bear the weight of a word, and I don't blame them. The work is hard enough in decent weather; they are dropping off sick every day. The night-shift boys can't sleep in their hot little houses — they look as if they 'd all been on a two

weeks' tear. The next improvement we make I shall build a rest-house where the night-shift can turn in and sleep inside of stone walls, without crying babies and scolding wives clattering around. This heat every summer costs us thousands of dollars in delays, from wear and tear and extra strain — tempers and nerves giving out, men getting frantic and jerking things. I believe it breeds a form of acute mania when it keeps on like this."

"Yes, the point of view changes the instant the sun goes down," said Mrs. Thorne. "I am glad I did not send my letter. Will you let me read it to you, Henry?"

"Not now; let us enjoy the peace of God while it lasts." He stretched himself on his back on the rattan lounge, and folded his hands on that part of his person which illustrated, geographically speaking, the great Continental Divide. The locked hands rose softly up and down. His wife fanned him in silence.

He turned his head and looked at her; her tired eyes, the dragged lines about her mouth, disturbed his sense of rest. He took the fan from her and returned her attention vigorously. "Please don't!" she said with a little

teased laugh. She rearranged the lock he had blown across her forehead. His larger help she needed, but he had seldom known how to pet her in little ways.

"I think you ought to let me read it to you," she said. "There is nothing so difficult as telling the truth, even about one's self, and when it 's another person" —

"That 's what I claim; she is the only one who can tell it."

"This is a case of first aid to the injured," she sighed. "I may not be a surgeon, but I must do what I can for my son."

Then there was silence; the valley grew dimmer, the sky nearer and more intense.

"Yes, the night forgives the day," after a while she said; "it even forgets. And we forget what we were, and what we did, when we were young. What is the use of growing old if we can't learn to forgive?" she vaguely pleaded; and suddenly she began to weep.

The rattle of a miner's cart broke in upon them; it stopped at the gate. Mr. Thorne half rose and looked out; a man was hurrying up the walk. He waved with his cane for him to stop where he was. Messengers at this hour were usually bearers of bad news, and he did

not choose that his wife should know all the troubles of the mines.

The two men conversed together at the gate; then Mr. Thorne returned to explain.

"I must go over to the office a moment, and I may have to go to the power-house."

"Is anybody hurt?"

"Only a pump. Don't think of things, dear. Just keep cool while you can."

"For pity's sake, there is a carriage!" Mrs. Thorne exclaimed. "We are going to have a visitor. Fancy making calls after such a day as this!"

Mr. Thorne hurried away with manlike promptitude in the face of a social obligation. The mistress stepped inside and gave an order to Ito.

As she returned, a lady was coming up the walk. She was young and tall, and had a distant effect of great elegance. She held herself very erect, and moved with the rapid, swimming step peculiar to women who are accustomed to the eyes of critical assemblages. Her thin black dress was too elaborate for a country drive; it was a concession to the heat which yet permitted the wearing of a hat, a filmy creation supporting a pair of wings that

started up from her beautiful head like white flames. But Mrs. Thorne chiefly observed the look of tense preparation in the face that met hers. She retreated a little from what she felt to be a crisis of some sort, and her heart beat hard with acute agitation.

"Mrs. Thorne?" said the visitor. "Do I need to tell you who I am? Has any one forewarned you of such a person as Helen Benedet?"

The two women clasped hands hurriedly. The worn eyes of the elder, strained by night-watchings, drooped under the young, dark ones, reinforced by their splendor of brows and lashes.

"It was very sweet of you to come," she said in a lifeless voice.

"Without an invitation! You did not expect me to be quite so sweet as that?"

Mrs. Thorne did not reply to this challenge. "You are not alone?" she asked gently.

"I am alone, dear Mrs. Thorne. I am everything I ought not to be. But you will not mind for an hour or two? It 's a great deal to ask of you, this hot night, I know."

"You must not think of going back to-night." Mrs. Thorne glanced at the hired

carriage from town. "Did you come on purpose, this dreadful weather, my dear? I am very stupid, but I 've only just come myself."

"Oh, you are angelic! I heard at Colfax, as we were coming up, that you were at the mine. I came — by main strength. But I should have come somehow. Have you people staying with you? You look so very gay with your lights — you look like a whole community."

"We have no lights here, you see; we are anything but gay. We were talking of you only just now," Mrs. Thorne added infelicitously.

The other did not seem to hear her. She let her eyes rove down the lengths of empty piazza. The close-reefed awnings revealed the stars above the trees, dark and breezeless on the lawn. The matted rose-vines clung to the pillars motionless.

"What a strange, dear place!" she murmured. "And there is no one here?"

"No one at all. We are quite alone. We really must have you."

"I will stay, then. It 's perfectly fearful, all I have to say to you. I shall tire you to death."

Ito, appearing, was ordered to send away the lady's carriage.

"May he bring me a glass of water? Just water, please." The tall girl, in her long black dress, moved to and fro, making a pretense of the view to escape observation.

"What is that sloping house that roars so? It sounds like a house of beasts. Oh, the stamps, of course! There goes one on the bare metal. Did anything break then?"

"Oh, no," said Mrs. Thorne; "things do not break so easily as that in a stamp-mill. Only the rock gets broken."

Ito returned with a tray of iced soda, and was spoken to aside by his mistress.

"It 's quite a farce," she said, "preparing beds for our friends in this weather. No one sleeps until after two, and then it is morning; and though we shut out the heat, it beats on the walls and burns up the air inside, and we wake more tired than ever."

"Let us not think of sleep! I need all the night to talk in. I have to tell you impossible things."

"Is Willy's father to be included in this talk?" Mrs. Thorne inquired; "because he is coming — he is there at the gate."

She rose uneasily. Her visitor rose, too, and together they watched the man's unconscious figure approaching. An electric lamp above the gate threw long shadows, like spokes of a wheel, across the grass. Mr. Thorne's face was invisible till he had reached the steps.

"Henry," said his wife, "you do not see we have a visitor."

He took off his hat, and perceiving a young lady, waved her a gallant and playful greeting, assuming her to be a neighbor. Miss Benedet stepped back without speaking.

"God bless me!" said Thorne simply, when his wife had named their guest, and so left the matter, for Miss Benedet to acknowledge or deny their earlier meeting.

Mrs. Thorne gave her little coughing laugh.

"Well, you two!" she said with ghastly gayety. "Must I repeat, Henry, that this is" —

"He is trying to think where he has seen me before," said Helen Benedet. There was a ring in her voice like that of the stamp-heads on the bare steel.

"I am wondering if you remember where you saw me before," Thorne retorted. He did not like the young lady's presence there. He

thought it extraordinary and rather brazen. And he liked still less to be drawn into a woman's parlance.

Mrs. Thorne sat still, trembling. "Henry, tell her! Speak to her!"

Miss Benedet turned from husband to wife. Her face was very pale. "Ah," she said, "you knew about me all the time! He has told you everything — and you called me 'my dear'! Is it easy for you to say such things?"

"Never mind, never mind! What did you wish to say to me? What was it?"

"Give me a moment, please! This alters everything. I must get accustomed to this before we go any further."

She reached out her white arm with the thin sleeve wrinkled over it, and helped herself again to water. In every gesture there was the poise and distinction of perfect self-command, a highly wrought self-consciousness, as far removed from pose as from Nature's simplicity. Natural she could never be again. No woman is natural who has a secret experience to guard, whether of grief or shame, her own or of any belonging to her.

"You are the very man," she said, "the one who would not promise. And you kept your

word and told your wife. And how long have you known of — of this engagement?"

Mr. Thorne looked at his wife.

"Only a few days," she said.

"Still, there has been time," the girl reflected. She let her voice fall from its high society pitch. "I did not dream there was so much mercy in the world — among parents! You both knew, and you have not told him. You deserve to have Willy for your son!"

Mrs. Thorne leaned forward to speak. Her husband, guessing what trouble her conscience would be making her, forestalled the effort with a warning look. "There was no mercy in the case," he bluntly said; "we do not know your story."

Miss Benedet continued, as if thinking aloud: "Yet you gave me that supreme trust, that I would tell him myself! I have not, and now it is too late. Now I can never know how he would have taken it had he known in time. I do not want his forgiveness, you may be sure, or his toleration. I must be what I was to him or nothing. You will tell him, and then he will understand the letter I wrote him last night, breaking the engagement. We may be honest with each other now; there is no peace of the

family to provide for. This night's talk, and I leave myself, my whole self, with you, to do with as you think best for him. If you think better to have it over at one blow, tell him the worst. The facts are enough if you leave out the excuses. But if you want to soften it for the sake of his faith in general, — is n't there some such idea, that men lose their faith in all women through the fault of one? — why, soften it all you like. Make me the victim of circumstances. I can show you how. I had forgiven myself, you know. I thought I was as good as new. I had forgotten I had a flaw. And I was so tired of being on the defensive. Now at last, I said, I shall have a friend! You know — *do* you know what a restful, impersonal manner your son has? What quiet eyes! We rode and talked together like two young men. It seems a pleasure common enough with some girls, but I never had it; lads of my own age were debarred when I was a girl. I had neither girls nor boys to play with. Girl friends were dealt out to me to fit my supposed needs, but taken that way as medicine I did n't find them very interesting. If I clung to one more than another, that one was not asked soon again for fear of inordinate affec-

tions and unbalanced enthusiasms. I was to be an all-around young woman; so they built a wall all around me. It fitted tight at last, and then I broke through one night and emptied my heart on the ground. My plea, you see, is always ready. Could I have lived and kept on scorning myself as I did that night? Do you remember?" She bent her imperative, clear gaze upon Thorne. "I told you the truth when you gave me a chance to lie. Heaven knows what it cost to say, 'I came with him of my own free will!'"

Mrs. Thorne put her hand in her husband's. He pressed it absently, with his eyes on the ground.

"It is such a mercy that I need not begin at the beginning. You know the worst already, and your divine hesitation before judgment almost demands that I should try to justify it. I *may* excuse myself to you. I will not be too proud to meet you half-way; but remember, when you tell the story to him, everything is to be sacrificed to his cure."

"When we really love them," Mrs. Thorne unexpectedly argued, "do we want them to be cured?"

The defendant looked at her in astonish-

ment. "Do I understand you?" she asked. "You must be careful. I have not told you my story. Of course I want to influence you, but nothing can alter the facts."

There was no reply, and she took up her theme again with visible and painful effort. A sickening familiarity, a weariness of it all before she had begun, showed in her voice and in her pale, reluctant smile.

"Seven years is a long time," she said, looking at Thorne. "Are you sure you have forgotten nothing? You saw what the man was?" she demanded. "He was precisely what he looked to be — one of the men about the stables. I was not supposed to know one from another.

"It is a mistake to talk of a girl having fallen. She has crawled down in her thoughts, a step at a time — unless she fell in the dark; and I declare that before this happened it was almost dark with me!

"My mother is a very clever woman; she has had the means to carry out her theories, and I am her only child (Norwood Benedet is my half-brother). I was not allowed to play with ordinary children; they might have spoiled my accent or told me stories that

would have made me afraid of the dark; and while the perfect child was waited for, I had only my nurses. I was not allowed to go to school, of course. Schools are for ordinary children. When I was past the governess age I had tutors, exceptional beings, imported like my frocks. They were too clever for the work of teaching one ignorant, spoiled child. They wore me out with their dissertations, their excess of personality, their overflow of acquirements, all bearing upon poor, stupid me, who could absorb so little. And mama would not allow me to be pushed, so I never actually worked or played. These persons were in the house, holidays and all, and there was a perpetual little dribble of instruction going on. Oh, how I wearied of the deadly deliberation of it all!

"As a family we have always been in a way notorious; I am aware of that: but my mother's ideals are far different from those that held in father's young days, when he made his money and a highly ineligible circle of acquaintances. Nordy inherited all the fun and the friends, and he spent the money like a prince. Once or twice a year he would come down to the ranch, and the place would be

filled with his company, and their horses and jockeys and servants. Then mama would fly with me till the reign of sport was over. It was a terrible grief to have to go at the only time when the ranch was not a prison. I grew up nursing a crop of smothered rebellions and longings which I was ashamed to confess. At sixteen mama was to take me abroad for two years; I was to be presented and brought home in triumph, unless Europe refused to part with a pearl of such price. All pearls have their price. I was not left in absolute ignorance of my own. Of all who suffered through that night's madness of mine, poor mama is most to be pitied. There was no limit to her pride in me, and she has never made the least pretense that religion or philosophy could comfort her.

"Now, before I really begin, shall we not speak of something else for a while? I do not want to be quite without mercy."

"I think you had better go on," said Mrs. Thorne gently; "but take off your bonnet, my dear."

"Still 'my dear'?" sighed the girl. "Is so much kindness quite consistent with your duty? Will you leave *all* the plain speaking to me?"

"Forgive me," said the mother humbly; "but I cannot call you 'Miss Benedet.' We seem to have got beyond that."

"Oh, we have got beyond everything! There is no precedent for us in the past" — she felt for her hat pins — "and no hope in the future." She put off the winged circlet that crowned her hair, and Mrs. Thorne took it from her. Almost shyly the middle-aged woman, who had never herself been even pretty, looked at the sad young beauty, sitting uncovered in the moonlight.

"You should never wear anything on your head. It is desecration."

"Is it? I always conform, you know. I wear anything, do anything, that is demanded."

"Ah, but the head — such hair! I wonder that I do not hate you when I think of my poor Willy."

"You will hate me when I am gone," said the beautiful one wearily; "you may count on the same revulsion in him. I know it. I have been through it. There is nothing so loathsome in the bitter end as mere good looks."

"Ah, but why" — the mother checked her-

self. Was she groveling already for Willy's sake? She had stifled the truth, and accepted thanks not her due, and listened to praise of her own magnanimity. Where were the night's surprises to leave her?

II

Mr. Thorne had changed his seat, and the sound of a fresh chair creaking under his comfortable weight was a touch of commonplace welcomed by his wife with her usual laugh, half amused and half apologetic.

"Why do you go off there, Henry? Do you expect us to follow you?"

"There 's a breeze around the corner of the house!" he ejaculated fervently.

"Go and find it, then; we do not need you. Do we?"

"*I* need him," said the girl in her sweetest tones. "He helped me once, without a word. It helps me now to have him sitting there" —

"Without a word!" Mrs. Thorne irrepressibly supplied.

"Why can't we let her finish?" Thorne

demanded, hitching his chair into an attitude of attention.

It was impossible for Miss Benedet to take up her story in the key in which she had left off. She began again rather flatly, allowing for the chill of interruptions: —

"To go back to that summer; I was in my sixteenth year, and the policy of expansion was to have begun. But father's health broke, and mama was traveling with him and a cortége of nurses, trying one change after another. It was duller than ever at the ranch. We sat down three at table in a dining-room forty feet long, Aunt Isabel Dwight, Fräulein Henschel, and myself. Fräulein was the resident governess. She was a great, soft-hearted, injudicious creature, a mass of German interjections, but she had the grand style on the piano. There had been weeks of such weather as we are having now. Exercise was impossible till after sundown. I had dreamed of a breath of freedom, but instead of the open door I was in straiter bonds than ever.

"I revolted first against keeping hours. I would not get up to breakfast, I refused to study, it was too hot to practice. I took my own head about books, and had my first great

orgy of the Russians. I used to lie beside a chink of light in the darkened library and read while Fräulein in the music-room held orgies of her own. She had just missed being a great singer; but she was a master of her instrument, and her accompaniments were divine. What voice she had was managed with feeling and a pure method, and where voice failed her the piano thrilled and sobbed, and broke in chords like the sea.

"I can give you no idea of the effect that Tolstoi, combined with Fräulein's music, had upon me. My heart hung upon the pauses in her song; it beat, as I read, as if I had been running. I would forget to breathe between the pages. One day Fräulein came in and found me in the back chapters of 'Anna Karénina.' She had been playing one of Lizst's rhapsodies — the twelfth. Waves of storm and passion had been thundering through the house, with keen little rifts of melody between, too sweet almost to be endured. She was very negligée, as the weather obliged us to be. Her great white arms were bare above the elbow, and as wet as if she had been over the wash-tub.

"'That is not a book for a *jeune fille*,' she said.

"I was in a rapture of excitement; the interruption made me wild. 'All the books are for me,' I told her. 'I will read what I please.'

"'You will go mad!'

"I went on reading.

"'You have no way to work it off. You will not study, you cannot sing, you write no letters, the mother does not believe'—

"'Do go away!' I cried.

"'—in the duty to the neighbor. Ach! what will you do with the whole of Tolstoi and Turgenieff shut up within you?'

"'I can ride,' I said. 'If you don't want me to go mad, leave me in the evenings to myself. Take my place in the carriage with Aunt Isabel, and let me ride alone.'

"Fräulein had lived in bonds herself, and she had the soul of an artist. She knew what it is, for days together, to have barely an hour to one's own thoughts; never to step out alone of a summer night, after a long, hot, feverish day. She let me go with old Manuel, the head groom, as my escort. He was no more hindrance to solitude than a pine-tree or a post.

"The reading and the music and the heat went on. I was in a fever of emotion such

as I had never known. Fräulein perceived it. She recommended 'My Religion' as an antidote to the romances. I did not want his religion. I wanted his men and women, his reading of the human soul, the largeness of incident, the sense of time and space, the intricacy of family life, the problems of race, the march of nations across the great world-canvas.

"I rode — not alone, but with the high-strung beings that lived between the pages of my books: men and women who knew no curb, who stopped at nothing, and who paid the price of their passionate mistakes. Old Manuel, standing by the horses, looked strange to me. I spoke to him dramatically, as the women I read of would have spoken. Nothing could have added to or detracted from his own manner. He was of the old Spanish stock, but for the first time I saw his picturesqueness. I liked him to call me 'the Niña,' and address me in the third person with his eyes upon the ground.

"All this was preparatory. It is part of my defense; but do not forget the heat, the imprisonment, the sense of relief when the sun went down, the wild, bounding rapture of those night rides.

"One evening it was not Manuel who stood by the horses in the white track between the laurels. It was a figure as statuesque as his, but younger, and the pose was not that of a servant. It was the stand-at-ease of a soldier, or of an Indian wrapped in his blanket in the city square. This man was conscious of being looked at, but his training, of whatever sort, would not permit him to show it. Plainly the training had not been that of a groom. I was obliged to send him to the stables for his coat, and remind him that his place was behind. He took the hint good-humoredly, with the nonchalance of a big boy condescending to be taught the rules of some childish game. As we were riding through the woods later, I caught the scent of tobacco. It was my groom smoking. I told him he could not smoke and ride with me. He threw away his cigarette and straightened himself in the saddle with such a smile as he might have bestowed on the whims of a child. He obeyed me exactly in everything, with an exaggerated ironical precision, and seemed to find amusement in it. I questioned him about Manuel. He had gone to one of the lower ranches, would not be back for weeks. By whose orders was he

attending me? By Manuel's, he said. He must then have had qualifications.

"'What is one to call you?' I asked him.

"He hesitated an instant. 'Jim is what I answer to around here,' said he.

"'What is your *name?*' I repeated.

"'The lady can call me anything she likes,' —he spoke in a low, lazy voice, —'but Dick Malaby is my name.'

"We have better heroes now than the Cheyenne cowboys, but I felt as a girl to-day would feel if she discovered she had been telling one of the men of the Merrimac to ride behind!"

"They would not need to be told," Mrs. Thorne interjected.

"No, that is the difference; but discipline did not appeal to me then; recklessness did. Every man on the place had taken sides on the Wyoming question; feeling ran high. Some of them had friends and relatives among the victims. Yet this man in hiding had tossed me his name to play with, not even asking for my silence, though it was the price of his life, and all in a light-hearted contempt for the curious ways of the 'tony set,' as he would have called us.

"I signed to him one evening to ride up. 'I want you to talk to me,' I said. 'Tell me about the cattle war.'

"'Miss Benedet forgets — my place is behind.' He touched his hat and fell back again. Lesson for lesson — we were quits. I made no further attempt to corrupt my own pupil.

"We rode in silence after that, but I was never without the sense of his ironical presence. I was conscious of showing off before him. I wished him to see that I could ride. Fences and ditches, rough or smooth, he never interfered with my wildest pace. I could not extract from him a look of surprise, far less the admiration that I wanted. What was a girl's riding to him? He knew a pace — all the paces — that I could never follow. I felt the absurdity of our mutual position, its utter artificiality, and how it must strike him.

"In the absence of words between us, externals spoke with greater force. He had the Greek line of head and throat, and he sat his horse with a dare-devil repose. The eloquence of his mute attitudes, his physical mastery of the conditions, his strength repressed, tied to my silly freaks and subject to my commands, while his thoughts roamed free! That was

the beginning. It lasted through a week of starlight and a week of moonlight — lyric nights with the hot, close days between; and each night an increasing interest attached to the moment when he was to put me on my horse. I make no apology for myself after that.

"One evening we approached a gate at the farther end of our longest course, and the gate stood open. He rode on to close it. I stopped him. 'I am going out,' I said. It was a resolution taken that moment. He held up his watch to the light, which made me angry.

"'Go back to the stables,' I said, 'if you are due there. *I* don't want to know the time.'

"He brought his horse alongside. 'Where is Miss Benedet going, please?'

"'Anywhere,' I said, 'where it will be cool in the morning.'

"'Miss Benedet will have a long ride. Does she wish for company?'

"I did not answer. Something drove me forward, though I was afraid.

"'Outside that gate,' he went on quietly, '*I* shall set the pace, and I do not ride behind.' Still I did not answer. 'Is that the understanding?'

"'Ride where you please,' I said.

"After that he took command, not roughly or familiarly, but he no longer used the third person, as I had instructed him, in speaking to me. The first time he said 'you' it sent the blood to my face. We were far up the mountain then, and morning was upon us.

"I wish to be definite here. From the moment I saw him plainly face to face the illusion was gone. Before, I had seen him by every light but daylight, and generally in profile. The profile is not the man. It is the plan in outline, but the eyes, the mouth, tell what he has made of himself. So attitude is not speech. As a shape in the moonlight he had been eloquent, but once at my side, talking with me naturally — I need not go on! From that moment our journey was to me a dream of horror, a series of frantic plans for escape.

"All fugitives on the coast must put to sea. The Oakland ferry would have answered my purpose. I would never have been seen with him in the city — alive.

"But at Colfax we met your husband. He knows — you know — the rest."

In thinking of the one who had first pitied her, pity for herself overcame her, and the proud penitent broke down.

Mr. and Mrs. Thorne sat in the shy silence of older persons who are past the age of demonstrative sympathy. The girl rose, and as she passed her hostess she put out her hand. Mrs. Thorne took it quickly and followed her. They found a seat by themselves in a dark corner of the porch.

"Your poor, good husband — how tired he is! How patiently you have listened, and what does it all come to?"

"Think of yourself, not of us," said Mrs. Thorne.

"Oh, it's all over for me. I have had my fight. But you have *him* to grieve for."

"Shall you not grieve for him yourself a little?"

The girl sat up quickly.

"If you mean do I give him up without a struggle — I do not. But you need not say that to him. I told him that it was all a mistake; I did not — do not love him."

"How could you say that" —

"It was necessary. Without that I should have been leaving it to his generosity. Now it remains only to show him how little he has lost."

"But could you not have done that without

belying yourself? You do — surely you still care for him a little?"

"Insatiate mother! Is there any other proof I can give?"

"Your hand is icy cold."

"And my face is burning hot. Good-night. May I say, 'Now let thy servant depart in peace'?"

"I shall not know how to let you go to-morrow, and I do not see, myself, why you should go."

"You will — after I am gone."

"My dear, are you crying? I cannot see you. How cruel we have been, to sit and let you turn your life out for our inspection!"

"It was a free exhibition! No one asked me, and I did not even come prepared, more than seven years' study of my own case has prepared me.

"I was a child; but the fault was mine. I should have been allowed to suffer for it in the natural way. No good ever comes of skulking. But they hurried me off to Europe, and began a cowardly system of concealment. They made me almost forget my own misconduct in shame for the things they did by way of covering it up. My mother never took me in her arms and

cried over my disgrace. She would not speak of it, or allow me to speak. Not a word nor an admission; the thing must be as though it had never been!

"They ruined Dick Malaby with their hush-money. They might better have shot him, but that would have made talk. My father died with only servants around him. Mama could not go to him. She was too busy covering my retreat. Oh, she kept a gallant front! I admired her, I pitied her, but I loathed her policy. Does not every girl know when she has been dedicated to the great god Success, and what the end of success must be?

"I told mama at last that if she would bring men to propose to me I should tell them the truth. Does Lord So-and-so wish to marry a girl who ran away with her father's groom? That was the breach between us. She has thrown herself into it. She is going to marry a title herself, not to let it go out of the family. Have you not heard of the engagement? She is to be a countess, and the property is controlled by her, so now I have an excuse for doing something."

"My dear!" Mrs. Thorne took the girl's cold hands in hers. "Do you mean that you are not your father's heiress?"

"Only by mama's last will and testament. We know what that would be if she made it now!"

"It was *then* you came home?"

"It was then, when I learned that one of my rejected suitors was to become my father. He might be my grandfather. But let us not be vulgar!"

"Are n't you girls going to bed to-night?" Mr. Thorne inquired, with his usual leaning toward peace and quietness. "You can't settle everything at one sitting."

"Everything is settled, Mr. Thorne, and I am going to bed," said Miss Benedet.

Mrs. Thorne did not release her hands. "I want to ask you one more question."

"I know exactly what it is, and I will tell you to-morrow."

"Tell me now; it is perfectly useless going to your room; the temperature over your bed is ninety-nine."

"The question, then! Why did I allow your son to commit himself in ignorance?"

"No, *no!*" Mrs. Thorne protested.

"Yes, yes! You have asked that question, you must have. You are an angel, but you are a mother, too."

"I have asked no questions since you began to tell your story; but I have wondered how Willy could have found courage, in one week, to offer himself to such gifts and possessions as yours."

"A mother, and a worldly mother!" Miss Benedet apostrophized. "I did not look for such considerations from you. And you are troubled for the modesty of your son?"

"My dear, he has nothing, and he is — of course we think him everything he should be — but he is not a handsome boy."

"Thank Heaven he is not."

"And he does not talk" —

"About himself. No."

"Ah, you do care for him! You understand him. You would" —

Miss Benedet rose to her feet with decision.

"You have not answered my question," the unconscionable mother pursued. "Does he know — is it known that you are not the great heiress your name would imply?"

"Everything is known," said the girl. "You do not read your society column, I see. Six weeks ago you might have learned the fate of my father's millions."

She stood by the balustrade and leaned out

under the stars, taking a deep breath of the night's growing coolness. A rose-spray touched her face. She put it back, and a shower of dry, scented petals fell upon her breast and sleeve.

"There is always one point in every true story," she said in a tired voice, "where explanations cease to explain. The mysteries claim their share in us, deny them as we will. I don't know why it was, but from the time I threw off all that bondage to society and struck out for myself, I felt made over. Life began again with life's realities. I came home to earn my bread, and on that footing I felt sane and clean and honest. The question became not what I am or was, but what could I do? I discussed the question with your son."

"You discussed!"

"We did, indeed. We went over the whole field. East and west we tested my accomplishments by the standards of those who want teachers for their children. I have gone rather further in music than anything else. Even Fräulein would hardly say now I lacked an outlet. I was working things off one evening on the piano — many things beyond the power of speech — the help of prayer, I might say.

There were whispers about me already in the house."

"What *do* you mean?"

"People talking — my mother's old friends. It was rather serious, as I had been thinking of their daughters for pupils. I thought I was alone, but your son — the 'boy' as you call him — was listening. He came and stood beside me. For a person who does not talk, he can make himself quite well understood. I tried to go on playing. My blinded eyes, the wrong notes, told him all. I lay and thought all night, and asked myself, why might I not be happy and give happiness, like other women of my age. I denied to my conscience that I was bound to tell him, since I was not, never had been, what that story in words would report me. Why should I affect a lie in order literally, vainly to be honest? So a day passed, and another sleepless night. And now I had his image of me to battle with. Then it became impossible, and yet more necessary, and each day's silence buried me deeper beyond the hope of speech. So I gave it up. Why should he have in his wife less than I would ask for in my husband? I want none of your experienced men. Such a record as his, such

a look in the eyes, the expression unawares of a life of sustained effort — always in one direction" —

A white arm in a black sleeve pointed upward in silence.

"And you would rob him of his reward?" said the mother, in a choked voice.

"Mrs. Thorne! Do you not understand me? I am not talking for effect. But this is what happens if one begins to explain. I did not come here to talk to you for the rest of my life! It was your sweetness that undid me. I will never again say what I think of parents in general."

"Maggie, do you know what time it is?" a suppressed voice issued an hour later from that part of the house supposed to be dedicated to sleep. "Are you going to sit up till morning?"

"I am looking for my letter," came the answer, in a tragic whisper.

"What letter?"

"My letter to Willy, that you would n't let me read to you last night."

"You don't want to read it to me now, do you?"

There was no reply. A careful step kept moving about the inner rooms, newspapers rustled, and small objects were lifted and set down.

"Maggie, do come to bed! You can't mail your letter to-night."

"I don't want to mail it. I want to burn it. I will not have it on my conscience a moment longer" —

"I wish you 'd have me on your conscience! It 's after one o'clock." The voices were close together now, only an open door between the speakers.

"Won't you put something on and come out here, Henry? There is a light in Ito's house. I suppose you would n't let me go out and ask him?"

"I suppose not!"

"Then won't you go and ask if he saw a letter on my desk, sealed and addressed?"

Mr. Thorne sat up in bed disgustedly. "What is Ito doing with a light this time of night?"

"Hush, dear; don't speak so loud. He 's studying. He 's preparing himself to go into the Japanese navy."

"He is, is he! And that 's why he can't

get us our breakfast before half-past eight. I 'll see about that light!"

"The letter, the letter!" Mrs. Thorne prompted in a ghostly whisper. "Ask him if he saw it on my desk — a square blue envelope, thin paper."

The studious little cook was seated by a hot kerosene-lamp, at a table covered with picture-papers, soft Japanese books, and writing-materials. He was in his stocking-feet and shirt-sleeves, and his mental efforts appeared to have had a confusing effect on his usually sleek black hair, which stood all ways distractedly, while his sleepy eyes blinked under Mr. Thorne's brusque examination.

"I care fo' everything," he repeated, eliminating the consonants as he slid along. "Missa Tho'ne letta — all a-ready fo' mail — I putta pos'age-stamp, gifa to shif'-boss. I think Sa' F'a'cisco in a mo'ning. I care fo' everything!"

"Ito cares for everything," Mr. Thorne quoted, in answer to his wife's haggard inquiries. "He stamped your letter and sent it to town yesterday by one of the day-shift men."

"Now what shall be done!" Mrs. Thorne exclaimed tragically.

"I know what *I* shall do!" Mr. Thorne wrapped his toga around him with an air of duty done. But a husband cannot escape so easily as that. His ministering angel sat beside his bed for half an hour longer, brooding aloud over the day's disaster, with a rigid eye upon the question of personal accountability.

"If you had not stopped me, Henry, when I tried to confess about my letter! There 's no time for the truth like the present."

"My dear, when a person is telling a story you don't want to interrupt with quibbles of conscience; if it made it any easier for her to think us a little better than we are, why rob her of the delusion?"

"I shall have to rob her of it to-morrow. To think of my sitting there, a whited sepulchre, and being called generous and forbearing and merciful, with that letter lying on my desk all the time!"

"It would be lying there still except for an accident. She will see how you feel about it. Give her something to forgive in you. Depend upon it, she 'll rise to the occasion."

As the mother passed her guest's room next morning she paused and looked remorsefully at the closed door.

"I ought to have told her that we never shut our doors. She must be smothered. I wonder if she can be asleep."

Mr. Thorne went on into the dining-room. Mrs. Thorne knocked, in a whisper as it were. There was no answer. She softly unlatched the door, and a draft of air crept through, widening it with a prolonged and wistful creak. The sleeper did not stir. She had changed her pillows to the foot of the bed, and was lying in the full light, with her window-curtains drawn. In all the room there was an air of abandonment, an exhausted memory of the night's despairing heat. Mrs. Thorne stepped across the matting, and noiselessly bowed the shutters. A dash of spray from the lawn-sprinkler was spattering the sill, threatening to dampen a pile of dainty clothing laid upon a chair. She moved the chair, looked once more at the lovely dark-lashed sleeper, and left her again in peace.

Beside her plate at the breakfast-table there was a great heap of roses, gathered that morning, her husband's usual greeting. She praised them as she always did, and then began to finger them over, choosing the finest to save for her guest. Rare as they were in kind,

and opened that morning, there was not a perfect rose among them. Each one showed the touch of blight in bloom. Every petal, just unclosed and dewy at the core, was curled along the edges, scorched in the bud. It was not mildew or canker or disease, only "a touch of sun."

"I won't give them to her," said the mother; "they are too like herself."

She saw her husband go forth into the heat again, and blamed herself, according to her wont of a morning after the night's mistakes, for robbing him of his rest and heaping her self-imposed burdens upon him. He laughed at the remorse tenderly, and brushed away the burdens, and faced the day's actualities with the not too fine remark, "I must go and see what 's loose outside."

Everything was "loose" apparently. Something about a "hoist" had broken in the night, and the men were still at work without breakfast, an eighteen-hour shift. The order came for Ito to send out coffee and bread and fruit to the famished gang. Ito was in the lowest of spirits; had just given his mistress warning that he could not stay. The affair of the letter had wounded his susceptibilities; he

must go where he would be better understood. All this in a soft, respectful undertone, his mistress trying to comfort him, and incidentally hasten his response to the requisition from outside. At eleven o'clock Mr. Thorne sent in a pencil message on a card: "I shall not be home to lunch. Does she want to get the 12:30 train?" Mrs. Thorne replied in the same manner, by bearer: "She did, but she is asleep. I don't like to wake her."

The darkened house preserved its silence, a restless endurance of the growing heat. Mrs. Thorne, in the thinnest of morning gowns, her damp hair brushed back from her powdered temples, sat alone at luncheon. Ito had put a melancholy perfection into his last salad. It was his valedictory.

She was about to rise when Miss Benedet came silently into the room with her long, even step. Her dark eyes were full of sleep. Mrs. Thorne rang, and began to fuss a little over her guest to cover the shyness each felt at the beginning of a new day. They had parted at too high a pitch of expression to meet again in the same emotional key.

Miss Benedet looked at the clock, lifting her eyebrows wearily. "I have lost my train,"

she remarked, but added no reproaches. "Is there an evening train to the city?"

"Not from here," Mrs. Thorne replied; "but we could send you over to Colfax to catch the night train from there. I hoped we could have you another day."

"That would be impossible," said Miss Benedet; "but I shall be giving you a great deal of trouble."

"Oh, no; it is only ten miles. Mr. Thorne will take you; we will both take you. It is a beautiful drive by moonlight through the woods. Was I wrong not to call you?"

"If you were, you will be punished by having me on your hands this long, hot afternoon. I ought to have gone last night. When one has parted with the very last bit of one's self, one should make haste to remove the shell."

"Then you would have left me with something remaining on my mind, something I must get rid of at once. Come, let us go where we cannot see each other's faces. I am deeply in the wrong concerning you."

Mrs. Thorne went on incriminating herself so darkly in her preface that when she came to the actual offense her confessor smiled. "I am so relieved!" she exclaimed. "This is

much more like real life. I felt you must be keeping something back, or, if not, I could never live up to such a pitch of generosity. I am glad you did not reach it all at once."

"But what becomes of the truth — the story as it should have been told to Willy? Oh, I have sinned, for want of patience, of faith — not against you, dear, but my son!"

After a silence Miss Benedet said, "Now for the heart of my own weakness. Suppose that I did have a hope. Suppose that I had laid the responsibility upon you, the parents, hoping that you would decide for happiness, mere happiness, without question of desert or blame. And suppose you had defended me to him. Would that have been best? Where then would be his cure? Now let us put away all cowardice, for him as well as for ourselves. Happiness for him could have but one foundation. You have told him the facts; if he cannot bear them as all the world knows them, that is his cure. I thank you. You knew where to put the knife."

"Oh, but this is cruel!" said the mother. "I don't want to be your judge. You have had your punishment, and you took it like a queen. Now let us think of Willy!"

"Please!" said the girl. "I cannot talk of this any more. We must stop sometime."

The time of twilight came; the gasping house flung open doors and windows to the night. Mr. Thorne pursued his evening walk alone among the fruits and vegetables, counting his egg-plants, and marking the track of gophers in his rows of artichokes. The women were strolling toward the hill. Miss Benedet had put on a cloth skirt and stiff shirt-waist for her journey, and suffered from the change, but did not show it. Her beauty was not of the florid or melting order. Mrs. Thorne regarded her inconsolably, noting with distinct and separate pangs each item of her loveliness, as she moved serene and pale against the dark, resonant green of the pines. They followed a foot-path back among the trees to a small gate or door in the high boundary fence. Mrs. Thorne tried it to see if it were locked.

"Willy used to live, almost, on this hill when he came out for his vacations." She spoke dreamily, as if thinking aloud. "He slept in that tent. It looks like a little ghost to me these nights in the moonlight, the curtains flap in such a lonely way. That gate

was his back door through the woods to town. His wheel used to lean against this tree. I miss his fair head in the sun, and his white trousers springing up the hill. But one cannot keep one's boy forever. You have made him a man, my dear."

The mother put out her hand timidly. She had ventured on forbidden ground once more. But she was not rebuffed. The girl's hand clasped hers and drew it around a slender waist, and they walked like two school friends together.

"I cannot support the idea that you will never come again," mourned the elder. "It is years since I have known a girl like you — a girl who can say things. I can make no headway with girls in general. They are so big and silent and athletic. They wear pins and badges, and belong to more *things* than I have ever heard of!"

Miss Benedet laughed. "I am silent, too, sometimes," she said.

"But you are not dense!"

"I 'm afraid you go very much to extremes in your likes and dislikes, dear lady, and you are much younger than I, you know."

"I am quite aware of that," said Mrs.

Thorne. "You have had seven years of Europe to my twenty of Cathay."

"Dear Cathay!" the girl murmured, with moist eyes; "I could live in this place forever."

"Where have you lived? Tell me in how many cities of the world."

"Oh, we never lived. We stayed in places for one reason or another. We were two years in Vienna. I worked there. I was a pupil of Leschetizky."

"What!"

"Did I not tell you? I can play a little."

"A little! What does that exactly mean?"

"It means too much for drawing-room music, and not enough for the stage."

"You are not thinking of that, are you?"

"Why that voice of scorn? Have I hit upon one of your prejudices?"

"I am dreadfully old-fashioned about some things — publicity, for instance."

"It depends upon the kind, does n't it? But you will never hear of me on the concert stage. Leschetizky says I have not the poise I might have had. He is very clever. There was a shock, he says, to the nerve centres.

They will never again be quite under control. It is true. At this moment I am shivering within me because I must say good-by to one I might have had all my life for a friend. Is it so?"

"My dear, if you mean me, I love you!"

"Call me Helen, then. You said 'my dear' before you knew me."

"Before I meant it."

"I wonder who can be arriving. That is the carriage I came out in last night."

A light surrey with two seats passed below the hill, and was visible an instant against a belt of sky.

"It is going to stop," said Mrs. Thorne. "Suppose we step back a little. I shall not see visitors to-night. Very likely it is only some one for Mr. Thorne."

A tall young man in traveling clothes stepped out upon the horse-block, left his luggage there, and made ten strides up the walk. They heard his step exploring the empty piazzas.

"It is Willy!" said Mrs. Thorne in a staccato whisper.

"Then good-by!" said Miss Benedet. "I

will find Mr. Thorne in the garden. Dearest Mrs. Thorne, you must let me go!"

"You will not see him? Not see Willy!"

"Not for worlds. He must not know that I am here. I trust you." She tore herself away.

Mrs. Thorne stood paralyzed between the two — her advancing son, and her fleeing guest.

"Willy!" she cried.

Her tall boy was bending over her — once more the high, fair head, the smooth arch of the neck, which she could barely reach to put her arms about it.

"Mother!" The word in his grave man's voice thrilled her as once had the touch of his baby hands.

"I am afraid to look at you, my son. How is it with you?"

"I am all right, mother. How are things here?"

"Oh, don't speak of us! Did you get my letter?"

"This morning."

"And you read it, Willy?"

"Of course."

There was a silence. Mrs. Thorne clasped

her son's arm and leaned her head against it.

"I am sorry you worried so, mother."

"What does it matter about me?"

"I am sorry you took it so hard — because — I knew it all the time."

"You knew it! What do you mean?"

"A nice old lady told me. She was staying in the house. She cornered me and told me a long story — the day after I met Miss Benedet."

"What an infamous old woman!"

"She called herself a friend of yours — warned me for your sake, she said, and because she has sons of her own."

"Oh! Has she daughters?"

"Two — staying in the house."

"I see. She told it brutally, I suppose?"

"Quite so."

"Worse than I did, Willy?"

William the Silent held his peace.

"You did not believe it? How much of it did you believe?"

"Mother," he said, "do you think a man can't see what a girl is?"

"But what do you know about girls?"

"Where is she?"

"What!"

"Where is Helen? The man from Lord's said he brought her out here last night."

"Did you not get her letter?" Mrs. Thorne evaded.

"Where shall I find her?"

"Willy, I am a perjured woman! I have been making mischief steadily for two days."

"You might as well go on, mater." Willy beamed gravely upon his mother's career of dissimulation.

"Don't, for pity's sake, be hopeful! She said she would not see you for worlds."

"Then she has n't gone."

Willy took a quick survey of the premises. He had long gray eyes and a set mouth. He saw most things that he looked at, and when he aimed for a thing he usually got somewhere near the mark.

"She is not in the house," he decided; "she is not on the hill — remains the garden."

Mrs. Thorne stood alone, meditating on Miss Benedet's trust in her. She saw her husband, her stool of repentance and her mercy-seat

in one, plodding toward her contentedly across the soft garden ground, stepping between the lettuces and avoiding the parsley bed. He knocked off a huge fat kitchen weed with his cane.

"Where is that girl?" he said. "It's time you got your things on. We ought to be starting in ten minutes."

"If you can find Willy you'll probably find 'that girl'!" Mrs. Thorne explained, and then proceeded to explain further, as she walked with her husband back to the house.

"Well," he summed up, "what is your opinion of the universe up to date? Got any faith in anything left?"

THE MAID'S PROGRESS

THE MAID'S PROGRESS

From the great plateau of the Snake River, at a point that is far from any main station, the stage-road sinks into a hollow which the winds might have scooped, so constantly do they pounce and delve and circle round the spot. Down in this pothole, where sand has drifted into the infrequent wheel tracks, there is a dead stillness while the perpetual land gale is roaring and troubling above.

One noon at the latter end of summer a wagon carrying four persons, with camp gear and provision for a self-subsisting trip, jolted down into this hollow, the horses sweating at a walk as they beat through the heavy sand. The teamster drew them up and looked hard at the singular, lonely place.

"I don't see any signs of that old corral, do you?" objected the man beside him. He spoke low, as if to keep his doubts from their neighbors on the back seat. These, an old, delicate, reverend looking gentleman, and a veiled woman sitting very erect, were silent,

awaiting some decision of their fellow travelers.

"There would n't be much of anything left of it," the teamster urged on the point in question; "only a few rails and wattles, maybe. Campers would have made a clean-up of them."

"You think this is the place, do you not, Mr. Thane? This is Pilgrim Station?" The old gentleman spoke to the younger of the two men in front, who, turning, showed the three-quarter view of a tanned, immobile face and the keen side glance of a pair of dense black eyes, — eyes that saw everything and told nothing.

"One of our landmarks seems to be missing. I was just asking Kinney about it," he said.

Mr. Kinney was not, it appeared, as familiar as a guide should be with the road, which had fallen from use before he came to that part of the country; but his knowledge of roads in general inclined him to take with allowance the testimony of any one man of merely local information.

"That fool Mormon at the ferry hain't been past here, he said himself, since the stage was pulled off. What was here then would n't be

here now — not if it could be eat up or burnt up."

"So you think this is the place?" the old gentleman repeated. His face was quite pale; he looked about him shrinkingly, with a latent, apprehensive excitement strangely out of keeping with the void stillness of the hollow, — a spot which seemed to claim as little on the score of human interest or association as any they had passed on their long road hither.

"Well, it's just this way, Mr. Withers: here's the holler, and here's the stomped place where the sheep have camped, and the cattle trails getherin' from everywheres to the water, and the young rabbit brush that's sprung up since the plains was burnt over. If this ain't Pilgrim Station, we're lost pilgrims ourselves, I guess. We hain't passed it; it's time we come to it, and there ain't no road but this. As I put it up, this here has got to be the place."

"I believe you, Mr. Kinney," the old man solemnly confirmed him. "Something tells me that this is the spot. I might almost say," he added in a lower tone to his companion, while a slight shiver passed over him in the hot sunlight, "that a voice cries to us from the ground!"

Those in front had not heard him. After a pause Mr. Thane looked round again, smiled tentatively, and said, "Well?"

"Well, Daphne, my dear, had n't we better get out?" Mr. Withers conjoined.

She who answered to this pretty pagan name did so mutely by rising in her place. The wind had moulded her light-colored veil close to her half-defined features, to the outline of her cheeks and low-knotted hair; her form, which was youthful and slender, was swathed in a clinging raw-silk dust-cloak. As she stood, hesitating before summoning her cramped limbs to her service, she might have suggested some half-evolved conception of doubting young womanhood emerging from the sculptor's clay. Personality, as yet, she had none; but all that could be seen of her was pure feminine.

Thane reached the side of the wagon before the veiled young woman could attempt to jump. She freed her skirts, stepped on the brake bar, and stooping, with his support made a successful spring to the ground. Mr. Withers climbed out more cautiously, keeping his hand on Thane's arm for a few steps through the heavy sand. Thane left his

fellow pilgrims to themselves apart, and returned to help the teamster take out the horses.

"It looks queer to me," Mr. Kinney remarked, "that folks should want to come so far on purpose to harrer up their feelin's all over again. It ain't as if the young man was buried here, nor as if they was goin' to mark the spot with one of them Catholic crosses like you see down in Mexico, where blood 's been spilt by the roadside. But just to set here and think about it, and chaw on a mis'able thing that happened two years and more ago! Lord! I would n't want to, and I ain't his father nor yet his girl. Would you?"

"Hardly," said Thane. "Still, if you felt about it as Mr. Withers does, you 'd put yourself in the place of the dead, not the living; and he has a reason for coming, besides. I have n't spoken of it, because I doubt if the thing is feasible. He wants to see whether the water of the spring can be brought into the hollow here — piped, to feed a permanent drinking trough and fountain. Good for evil, you see — the soft answer."

"Well, that 's business! That gits down where a man lives. His cattle kin come in on

that, too. There 's more in that, to my mind, than in a bare wooden cross. Pity there won't be more teamin' on this road. Now the stage has hauled off, I don't expect as many as three outfits a year will water at that fountain, excusin' the sheep, and they 'll walk over it and into it, and gorm up the whole place."

"Well, the idea has been a great comfort to Mr. Withers, but it 's not likely anything more will ever come of it. From all we hear, the spring would have to run up hill to reach this hollow; but you won't speak of it, will you, till we know?"

"Gosh, no! But water might be struck higher up the gulch — might sink a trench and cut off the spring."

"That would depend on the source," said Thane, "and on how much the old gentleman is willing to stand; the fountain alone, by the time you haul the stone here, will foot up pretty well into the thousands. But we 'll see."

"Had n't you better stay round here with them till I git back?" Kinney suggested; for Thane had taken the empty canteens from the wagon, and was preparing to go with him to the spring. "You kin do your prospectin' later."

"They would rather be by themselves, I think," said Thane. But seeing Mr. Withers coming towards him, as if to speak, he turned back to meet him.

"You are going now to look for the spring, are you not?" the old gentleman asked, in his courteous, dependent manner.

"Yes, Mr. Withers. Is there anything I can do for you first?"

"Nothing, I thank you." The old gentleman looked at him half expectantly, but Thane was not equal, in words, to the occasion. "This is the place, Mr. Thane," he cadenced, in his measured, clerical tones. "This is the spot that last saw my dear boy alive, — that witnessed his agony and death." He extended a white, thin, and now shaking hand, which Thane grasped, uncovering his head. Mr. Withers raised his left hand; his pale eyes blinked in the sunlight; they were dim with tears.

"In memory of John Withers," he pronounced, "foully robbed of life in this lonely spot, we three are gathered here, — his friend, his father, and his bride that should have been." Thane's eyes were on the ground, but he silently renewed his grasp of the old man's

hand. "May God be our Guide as we go hence to finish our separate journeys! May He help us to forgive as we hope to be forgiven! May He teach us submission! But, O Lord! Thou knowest it is hard."

"Mr. Withers is a parson, ain't he?" Kinney inquired, as he and Thane, each leading one of the team horses, and with an empty canteen swinging by its strap from his shoulder, filed down the little stony gulch that puckers the first rising ground to riverward of the hollow. "Thought he seemed to be makin' a prayer or askin' a blessin' or somethin', when he had holt of you there by the flipper; kind of embarrassin', wa'n't it?"

"That's as one looks at it," said Thane. "Mr. Withers is a clergyman; his manner may be partly professional, but he strikes one as always sincere. And he has n't a particle of self-consciousness where his grief for his son is concerned. I don't know that he has about anything. He calls on his Maker just as naturally as you and I, perhaps, might take his name in vain."

"No, sir! I've quit that," Mr. Kinney objected. "I drawed the line there some years ago, on account of my wife, the way she

felt about it, and the children growin' up. I quit when I was workin' round home, and now I don't seem to miss it none. I git along jest as well. Course I have to cuss a little sometimes. But I liked the way you listened to the old man's warblin'. Because talkin' is a man's trade, it ain't to say he has n't got his feelin's."

As the hill cut off sounds of retreating voices and horseshoes clinking on the stones, a stillness that was a distinct sensation brooded upon the hollow. Daphne sighed as if she were in pain. She had taken off her veil, and now she was peeling the gloves from her white wrists and warm, unsteady hands. Her face, exposed, hardly sustained the promise of the veiled suggestion ; but no man was ever known to find fault with it so long as he had hopes ; afterwards — but even then it was a matter of temperament. There were those who remembered it all the more keenly for its daring deviations and provoking shortcomings.

It could not have been said of Daphne that her grief was without self-consciousness. Still, much of her constraint and unevenness of manner might have been set down to the circumstances of her present position. Why

she should have placed herself, or have allowed her friends to place her, in an attitude of such unhappy publicity Thane had asked himself many times, and the question angered him as often as it came up. He could only refer it to the singularly unprogressive ideas of the Far West peculiar to Far Eastern people. Apparently they had thought that, barring a friend or two of Jack's, they would be as much alone with their tragic memories in the capital city of Idaho as at this abandoned stage-station in the desert where their pilgrimage had ended. They had not found it quite the same. Daphne could, and probably did, read of herself in the "Silver Standard," Sunday edition, which treats of social events, heralded among the prominent arrivals as "Jack Withers's maiden widow." This was a poetical flight of the city reporter. Thane had smiled at the phrase, but that was before he had seen Daphne; since then, whenever he thought of it, he pined for a suitable occasion for punching the reporter's head. There had been more of his language; the paper had given liberally of its space to celebrate this interesting advent of the maiden widow with her uncle, "the Rev. Withers," as the reporter styled him,

"father of the lamented young man whose shocking murder, two years ago, at Pilgrim Station, on the eve of his return to home and happiness, cast such a gloom over our community, in which the victim of the barbarous deed had none but devoted friends and admirers. It is to be hoped that the reverend gentleman and the bereaved young lady, his companion on this sad journey, will meet with every mark of attention and respect which it is in the power of our citizens to bestow, during their stay among us."

Now, in the dead, hot stillness, they two alone at last, Daphne sat beside her uncle in the place of their solemn tryst; and more than ever her excitement and unrest were manifest, in contrast to his mild and chastened melancholy. She started violently as his voice broke the silence in a measured, musing monotone:

> "'Drink, weary pilgrim, drink and pray
> For the poor soul of Sibyl Grey,
> Who built this cross and well.'

"These lines," he continued in his ordinary prose accent, "gave me my first suggestion of a cross and well at Pilgrim Station, aided, perhaps, by the name itself, so singularly appropriate; not at all consistent, Mr. Thane tells

me, with the usual haphazard nomenclature of this region. However, this is the old Oregon emigrant trail, and in the early forties men of education and Christian sentiment were pioneers on this road. But now that I see the place and the country round it, I find the Middle Ages are not old enough to borrow from. We must go back, away back of chivalry and monkish superstition, to the life-giving pools of that country where the story of man began; where water, in the language of its people, was justly made the symbol of their highest spiritual as well as physical needs and cravings. 'And David longed, and said, Oh, that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Beth-lehem, that is at the gate!' It is a far cry here to any gate but the gate of sunset, which we have been traveling against from morning to evening since our journey began, yet never approaching any nearer. But this, nevertheless, is the country of David's well, — a dry, elevated plain, surrounded by mountains strangely gashed and riven and written all over in Nature's characters, but except for the speech of a wandering, unlettered people, dumb as to the deeds of man. Mr. Thane tells me that if the wells on this road were as many as the

deaths by violence have been, we might be pasturing our horses in green fields at night, instead of increasing their load with the weight of their food as well as our own. Yes, it is a 'desolate land and lone;' and if we build our fountain, according to my first intention, in the form of a cross, blessing and shadowing the water, it must be a rude and massive one, such as humble shepherds or herdsmen might accidentally have fashioned in the dark days before its power and significance were known. It will be all the more enduring, and the text shall be" —

"Uncle," cried Daphne in a smothered voice, "never mind the text! *I* am your text! Listen to me! If your cross stood there now, here is the one who should be in the dust before it!" She pressed her open hand upon her breast.

The gesture, her emphasis, the extreme figure of speech she had used, were repellent to Mr. Withers over and above his amazement at her words. As he had not been observing her, he was totally unprepared for such an outburst.

"Daphne, my dear! Do I understand you? I cannot conceive" —

But Daphne could not wait for her meaning to sink in. "Uncle John," she interrupted, taking a quick breath of resolution, "I have read somewhere that if a woman is dishonest, deep down, deliberately a hypocrite, she ought to be gently and mercifully killed; a woman not honest had better not be alive. Uncle, I have something to say to you about myself. Gently and mercifully listen to me, for it ought to kill me to say it!"

Mr. Withers turned apprehensively, and was startled by the expression of Daphne's face. She was undoubtedly in earnest. He grew quite pale. "Not here, my dear," he entreated; "not now. Let our thoughts be single for this one hour that we shall be alone together. Let it wait for a little, this woeful confession. I think you probably exaggerate your need of it, as young souls are apt to who have not learned to bear the pain of self-knowledge, or self-reproach without knowledge. Let us forget ourselves, and think of our beloved dead."

"Uncle, it must be here and now. I cannot go away from this place a liar, as I came. Let me leave it here,—my cowardly, contemptible falsehood,—in this place of your cross. I am longing, like David, for that water they

have gone to find, but I will not drink at Pilgrim Station, except with clean lips that have confessed and told you all."

Mr. Withers shrank from these unrestrained and to him indecorous statements of feeling; they shocked him almost as much as would the spectacle of Daphne mutilating her beautiful hair, casting dust upon her head, and rending her garments before him. He believed that her trouble of soul was genuine, but his Puritan reserve in matters of conscience, his scholarly taste, his jealousy for the occasion which had brought them to that spot, all combined to make this unrestrained expression of it offensive to him. However, he no longer tried to repress her.

"Uncle, you don't believe me," she said; "but you must. I am quite myself."

"Except for the prolonged nervous strain you have been suffering; and I am afraid I have not known how to spare you as I might the fatigue, the altitude perhaps, the long journey face to face with these cruel memories. But I will not press it, I will not press it," he concluded hastily, seeing that his words distressed her.

"Press it all you can," she said. "I wish

you could press it hard enough for me to feel it; but I feel nothing — I am a stone. At this moment," she reiterated, "I have no feeling of any kind but shame for myself that I should be here at all. Oh, if you only knew what I am!"

"It is not what you are, it is who you are, that brings you here, Daphne."

"Yes, who I am! Who am I? What right had I to come here? I never loved him. I never was engaged to him, but I let you think so. When you wrote me that sweet letter and called me your daughter, why did n't I tell you the truth? Because in that same letter you offered me his money — and — and I wanted the money. I lied to you then, when you were in the first of your grief, to get his money! I have been trying to live up to that lie ever since. It has almost killed me; it has killed every bit of truth and decent womanly pride in me. I want you to save me from it before I grow any worse. You must take back the money. It did one good thing: it paid those selfish debts of mine, and it made mother well. What has been spent I will work for and pay back as I can. But I love *you*, uncle John; there has been no falsehood there."

"This is the language of sheer insanity, Daphne, of mental excitement that passes reason." Mr. Withers spoke in a carefully controlled but quivering voice — as a man who has been struck an unexpected and staggering blow, but considering the quarter it came from, is prepared to treat it as an accident. "The facts, John's own words in his last letter to me, cannot be gainsaid. 'I am coming home to you, dad, and to whom else I need not say. You know that I have never changed, but she has changed, God bless her! How well He made them, to be our thorn, our spur, our punishment, our prevention, and sometimes our cure! I am coming home to be cured,' he said. You have not forgotten the words of that letter, dear? I sent it to you, but first — I thought you would not mind — I copied those, his last words. They were words of such happiness; and they implied a thought, at least, of his Creator, if not that grounded faith"—

"They were hopes, only hopes!" the girl remorsefully disclaimed. "I allowed him to have them because I wanted time to make up my wretched, selfish mind. I had never made him a single promise, never said one word that could give me the right to pose as I did

afterwards, to let myself be grieved over as if I had lost my last hope on earth. I had his money all safe enough."

"Daphne, I forbid you to speak in that tone! There are bounds even to confession. If you think well to degrade yourself by such allusions, do not degrade me by forcing me to listen to you. This is a subject too sacred to be discussed in its mercenary bearings; settle that question with yourself as you will, but let me hear no more of it."

Daphne was silenced; for the first time in her remembrance of him she had seen her uncle driven to positive severity, to anger even, in opposition to the truth which his heart refused to accept. When he was calmer he began to reason with her, to uphold her in the true faith, against her seeming self, in these profane and ruthless disclosures.

"You are morbid," he declared, "over-sensitive, from dwelling too long on this painful chapter of your life. No one knows better than myself what disorders of the imagination may result from a mood of the soul, a passing mood, — the pains of growth, perhaps. You are a woman now; but let the woman not be too hard upon the girl that she was. After

what you have been through quite lately, and for two years past, I pronounce you mentally unfit to cope with your own condition. Say that you did not promise him in words; the promise was given no less in spirit. How else could he have been so exaltedly sure? He never was before. You had never before, I think, given him any grounds for hope?"

"No; I was always honest before," said Daphne humbly. "When I first refused him, when we were both such children, and he went away, I promised to answer his letters if he would let *that* subject rest. And so I did. But every now and then he would try me again, to see if I had changed, and that letter I would not answer; and presently he would write again, in his usual way. As often as he brought up the old question, just so often I stopped writing; silence was always my answer, till that last winter, when I made my final attempt to do something with my painting and failed so miserably. You don't know, uncle, how hard I have worked, or what it cost me to fail, — to have to own that all had been wasted: my three expensive winters in Boston, my cutting loose from all the little home duties, in the hope of doing something

great that would pay for all. And that last winter I did not make my expenses, even. After borrowing every cent that mother could spare (more than she ought to have spared; it was doing without a girl that broke her down) and denying myself, or denying her, my home visit at Christmas; and setting up in a studio of my own, and taking pains to have all the surroundings that are said to bring success, — and then, after all, to fail, and fail, and fail! And spring came, and mother looked so ill, and the doctor said she must have rest, total rest and change; and he looked at me as if he would like to say, 'You did it!' Well, the 'rest' I brought her was my debts and my failure and remorse; and I was n't even in good health, I was so used up with my winter's struggle. It was then, in the midst of all that trouble and shame and horror at myself, his sweet letter came. No, not sweet, but manly and generous, — utterly generous, as he always was. I ought to have loved him, uncle dear; I always knew it, and I did try very hard! He did not feel his way this time, but just poured out his whole heart once for all; I knew he would never ask me again. And then the fatal word; he said he had

grown rich. He could give me the opportunities my nature demanded. You know how he would talk. He believed in me, if nobody else ever did ; I could not have convinced him that I was a failure.

"It was very soothing to my wounds. I was absolutely shaken by the temptation. It meant so much ; such a refuge from self-contempt and poverty and blame, and such rest and comfort it would bring to mother ! I hope that had something to do with it. You see I am looking for a loophole to crawl out of ; I have n't strength of mind to face it without some excuse. Well, I answered that letter ; and I think the evil one himself must have helped me, for I wrote it, my first careful, deliberate piece of double-dealing, just as easily as if I had been practicing for it all my life. It was such a letter as any man would have thought meant everything ; yet if I had wanted, I could have proved by the words themselves that it meant nothing that could n't be taken back.

"I said to myself, If I can stand it, if I can hold out as I feel now, I will marry him ; then let come what may. I knew that some things would come, some things that I wanted very much.

"Then came the strange delay, the silence, the wretched telegrams and letters back and forth. Ah, dear, do I make you cry? Don't cry for him; you have not lost him. Cry for me, the girl you thought was good and pure and true! You know what I did then, when your dear letter came, giving me all he had, calling me your daughter, all that was left you of John! I deceived you in your grief, hating myself and loving you all the time. And here I am, in this place! Do you wonder I had to speak?"

"Your words are literally as blows to me, Daphne," Mr. Withers groaned, covering his face. After a while he said, "All I have in the world would have been yours and your mother's had you come to me, or had I suspected the trouble you were in. I ought to have been more observant. My prepossessions must be very strong; doubtless some of the readier faculties have been left out in my mental constitution. I hear you say these words, but even now they are losing their meaning for me. I can see that your distress is genuine, and I must suppose that you have referred it to its proper cause; but I cannot master the fact itself. You must give me time

to realize it. This takes much out of life for me."

"Not my love for *you*, uncle John; there has been no falsehood there."

"You could not have spared yourself and me this confession?" the old man queried. "But no, God forgive me! You must have suffered grievous things in your young conscience, my dear; this was an ugly spot to hide. But now you have fought your fight and won it, at the foot of the cross. To say that I forgive you, that we both, the living and the dead, forgive you, is the very least that can be said. Come here! Come and be my daughter as before! My daughter!" he repeated. And Daphne, on her knees, put her arms about his neck and hid her face against him.

"Thank Heaven!" he murmured brokenly, "it cannot hurt him now. He has found his 'cure.' As a candle-flame in this broad sunlight, so all those earthly longings" — The old gentleman could not finish his sentence, though a sentence was dear to him almost as the truth from which, even in his love of verbiage, his speech never deviated. "So we leave it here," he said at last. "It is between

us and our blessed dead. No one else need know what you have had the courage to tell me. Your confession concerns no other living soul, unless it be your mother, and I see no reason why her heart should be perturbed. As for the money, what need have I for more than my present sufficiency, which is far beyond the measure of my efforts or deserts? I beg you never to recur to the subject, unless you would purposely wish to wound me. This is a question of conscience purely, and you have made yours clean. Are you satisfied?"

"Yes," said Daphne faintly.

"What is the residue? Or is it only the troubled waters still heaving?"

"Yes, perhaps so."

"Well, the peace will come. Promise me, dear, that you will let it come. Do not give yourself the pain and humiliation of repeating to any other person this miserable story of your fault."

"It was more than a fault; you know that, uncle. Your conscience could not have borne it for an hour."

"Your sin, then. A habit of confession is debilitating and dangerous. God has heard you, and I, who alone in this world could have

the right to reproach you, have said to you, Go in peace. Peace let it be, and silence, which is the safest seal of a true confession."

"Do you mean that I am never to let myself be known as I am?" asked Daphne. Her face had changed; it wore a look of fright and resistance. "Why, that would mean that I am never to unmask; to go about all my life in my trappings of false widowhood. You read what that paper called me! I cannot play the part any longer."

"Are you speaking with reference to these strangers? But this will soon be over, dear. We shall soon be at home, where no one thinks of us except as they have known us all their lives. It will be painful for a little while, this conspicuousness; but these good people will soon pass out of our lives, and we out of theirs. Idle speculation will have little to do with us, after this."

"There will be always speculation," implored the girl. "It will follow me wherever I go, and all my life I shall be in bondage to this wretched lie. Take back the money, uncle, and give me the price I paid for it,— my freedom, myself as I was before I was tempted!"

"Ah, if that could be!" said the old gentle-

man. "Is it my poor boy's memory that burdens you so? Is it that which you would be freed from?"

"From doing false homage to his memory," Daphne pleaded. "I could have grieved for him, if I could have been honest; as it is, I am in danger almost of hating him. Forgive me, uncle, but I am! How do you suppose I feel when voices are lowered and eyes cast down, not to intrude upon my peculiar, privileged grief? 'Here I and Sorrow sit!' Is n't it awful, uncle? Is n't it ghastly, indecent? I am afraid some day I shall break out and do some dreadful thing, — laugh or say something shocking, when they try to spare my feelings. Feelings! when my heart is as hard, this moment, to everything but myself, myself! I am so sick of myself! But how can I help thinking about myself when I can never for one moment *be* myself?"

"This is something that goes deeper," said Mr. Withers. "I confess it is difficult for me to follow you here; to understand how a love as meek as that of the dead, who ask nothing, could lay such deadly weights upon a young girl's life."

"Not his love — mine, mine! Is it truly in

his grave? If it is not, why do I dare to profess daily that it is, to go on lying every day? I want back my word, that I never gave to any man. Can't one repent and confess a falsehood? And do you call it confessing, when all but one person in the world are still deceived?"

"It is not easy for me to advise you, Daphne," said Mr. Withers wearily. "Your struggle has discovered to me a weakness of my own: verily, an old man's fond jealousy for the memory of his son. Almost I could stoop to entreat you. I do entreat you! So long as we defraud no one else, so long as there is no living person who might justly claim to know your heart, why rob my poor boy's grave of the grace your love bestows, even the semblance that it was? Let it lie there like a mourning wreath, a purchased tribute, we will say," the father added, with a smile of sad irony; "but only a rude hand would rob him of his funereal honors. There seems to be an unnecessary harshness in this effort to right yourself at the cost of the unresisting dead. Since you did not deny him living, must you repudiate him now? Fling away even his memory, that casts so thin a shade upon your life, a faint morn-

ing shadow that will shrink as your sun climbs higher. By degrees you will be free. And, speaking less selfishly, would there not be a certain indelicacy in reopening now the question of your past relations to one whose name is very seldom spoken? Others may not be thinking so much of your loss — your supposed loss," the old gentleman conscientiously supplied — "as your sensitiveness leads you to imagine. But you will give occasion for thinking and for talking if you tear open now your girlhood's secrets. Whom does it concern, my dear, to know where or how your heart is bestowed?"

Daphne's cheeks and brow were burning hot; even her little ears were scarlet. Her eyes filled and drooped. "It is only right," she owned. "It is my natural punishment."

"No, no; I would not punish nor judge you. I love you too well. But I know better than you can what a safeguard this will be,— this disguise which is no longer a deception, since the one it was meant to deceive knows all and forgives it. It will rebuke the bold and hasty pretenders to a treasure you cannot safely part with, even by your own gift, as yet. You are still very young in some ways, my dear."

"I am old enough," said Daphne, "to have learned one fearful lesson."

"Do I oppress you with my view? Do I insist too much?"

Perhaps nothing could have lowered the girl in her own eyes more than this humility of the gentle old man in the face of his own self-exposed weakness, his pathetic jealousy for that self above self, — the child one can do no more than grieve for this side the grave. She had come to herself only to face the consciousness of a secret motive which robbed her confession of all moral value. Repentance, that would annul her base bargain now that the costs began to outweigh the advantages, was gilt edged, was a luxury; she was ashamed to buy back her freedom on such terms.

"Let it be as you say," she assented; "but only because you ask it. It will not be wrong, will it, if I do it for you?"

"I hope not," returned Mr. Withers. "The motive, in a silence of this kind that can harm no one, must make a difference, I should say."

So it was settled; and Daphne felt the weight of her promise, which the irony of justice had fastened upon her, as a millstone

round her neck for life; she was still young enough to think that whatever is must last forever. They sat in silence, but neither felt that the other was satisfied. Mr. Withers knew that Daphne was not lightened of her trouble, nor was he in his heart content with the point he had gained. The unwonted touch of self-assertion it had called for rested uneasily on him; and he could not but own that he had made himself Daphne's apologist, which no confessor ought to be, in this disguise by which he named the deception he was now helping her to maintain.

After a time, when Daphne had called his attention to the fact, he agreed that it was indeed strange their companions did not return; they had been gone an hour or more to find a spring said to be not half a mile away.

Daphne proposed to climb the grade and see if they were yet in sight, Mr. Withers consenting. Indeed, under the stress of his thoughts, her absence was a sensible relief.

From the hilltop looking down she could see the way they had gone; the crooked gulch, a garment's crease in the great lap of the table-land, sinking to the river. She saw no one, heard no sound but the senseless

hurry and bluster of the winds, — coming from no one knew where, going none cared whither. It blew a gale in the bright sunlight, mocking her efforts to listen. She waved her hand to her uncle's lone figure in the hollow, to signify that she was going down on the other side. He assented, supposing she had seen their fellow travelers returning.

She had been out of sight some moments, long enough for Mr. Withers to have lapsed into his habit of absent musing, when Thane came rattling down the slope of the opposite hill, surprised to see the old gentleman alone. His long, black eyes went searching everywhere while he reported a fruitless quest for the spring. Kinney and he had followed the gulch, which showed nowhere a vestige of water, save in the path of the spring freshets, until they had come in sight of the river; and Kinney had taken the horses on down to drink, riding one and leading the other. It would be nearly three miles to the river from where Thane had left him, but that was where all the deceptive cattle trails were tending. Thane, returning, had made a loop of his track around the hollow, but had failed to round up any spring. Hence, as he informed

Mr. Withers, this could not be Pilgrim Station. He made no attempt to express his chagrin at this cruel and unseemly blunder. The old gentleman accepted it with his usual uncomplaining deference to circumstances; still, it was jarring to nerves overstrained and bruised by the home thrust of Daphne's defection. He fell silent and drew within himself, not reproachfully, but sensitively. Thane rightly surmised that no second invocation would be offered when they should come to the true Pilgrim Station; the old gentleman would keep his threnodies to himself after this.

It would have been noticeable to any less celestial-minded observer than Mr. Withers the diffidence with which Thane, in asking after Miss Daphne Lewis, pronounced that young person's name. He did not wait for the old gentleman to finish his explanation of her absence, but having learned the way she had gone, dropped himself at a great pace down the gulch and came upon her unawares, where she had been sitting, overcome by nameless fears and a creeping horror of the place. She started to her feet, for Thane's was no furtive tread that crashed through the thorny greasewood and planted itself, a yard

at a bound, amongst the stones. The horror vanished and a flush of life, a light of joy, returned to her speaking face. He had never seen her so completely off her guard. He checked himself suddenly and caught his hat from his head; and without thinking, before he replaced it, he drew the back of his soft leather glove across his dripping forehead. The unconventional action touched her keenly. She was sensitively subject to outward impressions, and "the plastic" had long been her delight, her ambition, and her despair.

"Oh, if I could only have done something simple like that!" the defeated, unsatisfied artist soul within her cried. "That free, arrested stride, how splendid! and the hat crumpled in his hand, and his bare head and strong brows in the sunlight, and the damp points of hair clinging to his temples! No, he is *not* bald, — that was only a tonsure of white light on the top of his head; still, he must be hard on forty. It is the end of summer with him, too; and here he comes for water, thirsting, to satisfy himself where water was plentiful in spring, and he finds a dry bed of stones. Call it The End of Summer; it is enough. Ah, if I could ever have thought out

an action as simple and direct as that — and drawn it! But how can one draw what one has never seen!"

Not all this, but something else, something more that Daphne could not have put into words, spoke in the look which Thane surprised. It was but a flash between long lashes that fell instantly and put it out; but no woman whose heart was in the grave ever looked at a living man in that way, and the living man could not help but know it. It took away his self-possession for a moment; he stood speechless, gazing into her face with a question in his eyes which five minutes before he would have declared an insult to her.

Daphne struggled to regain her mask, but the secret had escaped: shameless Nature had seized her opportunity.

"How did I miss you?" she asked with forced coolness, as they turned up the gulch together. For the moment she had forgotten about the spring.

Thane briefly explained the mistake that had been made, adding, "You will have to put up with another day of us, now, — perhaps two."

"And where do you leave us, then?" asked Daphne stupidly.

"At the same place, — Decker's Ferry, you know." He smiled, indulgent to her crass ignorance of roads and localities. "Only we shall be a day longer getting there. We are still on the south side of the river, you remember?"

"Oh, of course!" said Daphne, who remembered nothing of the kind.

"It was a brutal fake, our springing this place on you for Pilgrim Station," he murmured.

"It has all been a mistake, — our coming, I mean; at least I think so."

It was some comfort to Thane to hear her say it, — he had been so forcibly of that opinion himself all along; but he allowed the admission to pass.

"It must have been a hard journey for you," he exerted himself to say, speaking in a surface voice, while his thoughts were sinking test-pits through layers of crusted consciousness into depths of fiery nature underneath.

She answered in the same perfunctory way: "You have been very kind; uncle has depended on you so much. Your advice and help have been everything to him."

He took her up with needless probity:

"Whatever you do, don't thank me! It 's bad enough to have Mr. Withers heaping coals of fire on my head. He gives me the place always, in regard to his son, of an intimate friend; which I never was, and God knows I never claimed to be! He took it for granted, somehow, — perhaps because of my letters at first, though any brute would have done as much at a time like that! Afterwards I would have set him right, but I was afraid of thrusting back the friendly imputation in his face. He credits me with having been this and that of a godsend to his son, when as a fact we parted, that last time, not even good friends. Perhaps you can forgive me for saying it? You see how I am placed!"

This iron apology which some late scruple had ground out of Thane seemed to command Daphne's deepest attention. She gave it a moment's silence, then she said, "There is nothing that hurts one, I think, like being unable to feel as people take for granted one must and ought to feel." But her home application of it gave a slight deflection to Thane's meaning which he firmly corrected.

"I felt all right; so did he, I dare say, but we never let each other know how we felt.

Men don't, as a rule. Your uncle takes for granted that I knew a lot about him, — his thoughts and feelings ; that we were immensely sympathetic. Perhaps we were, but we did n't know it. We knew nothing of each other intimately. He never spoke to me of his private affairs but once, the night before he started. It was at Wood River. Some of us gave him a little supper. Afterwards we had some business to settle and I was alone with him in his room. It was then I made my break ; and — well, it ended as I say : we quarreled. It has hurt me since, especially as I was wrong."

"What can men quarrel about when they don't know each other well? Politics, perhaps?" Daphne endeavored to give her words a general application.

"It was not politics with us," Thane replied curtly. Changing the subject, he said, "I wish you could see the valley from that hog-back over to the west." He pointed towards the spine of the main divide, which they would cross on their next day's journey. "Will you come up there this evening and take a look at the country? The wind will die down at sunset, I think."

There was a studied commonplaceness in his manner; his eyes avoided hers.

"Thanks; I should like to," she answered in the same defensive tone.

"To go back to what we were saying," Daphne began, when they were seated, that evening, on the hilltop. All around them the view of the world rose to meet the sky, glowing in the west, purple in the east, while the pale planets shone, and below them the river glassed and gleamed in its crooked bed. "I ask you seriously," she said. "What was the trouble between you?" Doubtless she had a reason for asking, but it was not the one that she proceeded to give. "Had you — have you, perhaps — any claims in a business way against him? Because, if you had, it would be most unfair to his father" — The words gave her difficulty; but her meaning, as forced meanings are apt to be, was more than plain.

Thane was not deceived: a woman who yields to curiosity, under however pious an excuse, is, to say the least, normal. Her thoughts are neither in the heavens above nor in the grave beneath. His black eyes flashed with

the provocation of the moment. It was instinct that bade him not to spare her.

"We quarreled," he said, "in the orthodox way, — about a woman."

"Indeed!" said Daphne. "Then you must pardon me."

"And her name," he continued calmly.

"I did not ask you her name."

"Still, since we have gone so far" —

"There is no need of our going any farther."

"We may as well, — a little farther. We quarreled, strangely enough, about you, — the first time he ever spoke of you. He would not have spoken then, I think, but he was a little excited, as well he might have been. Excuse me?" He waited.

"Nothing!" said Daphne. She had made an involuntary protesting sound.

"He said he hoped to bring you back with him. I asked how long since he had seen you; and when he told me five years, I remarked that he had better not be too sure. 'But you don't know her,' he said; 'she is truth itself, and courage. By as many times as she has refused to listen to me, I am sure of her now.' I did not gather somehow that you were — engaged to him, else I hope I should not have

gone so far. As it was, I kept on persisting — like a cynic who has no one of his own to be sure of — that he had better not be too sure! He might have seen, I thought then, that it was half chaff and half envy with me; but it was a nervous time, and I was less than sympathetic, less than a friend to him. And now I am loaded with friendship's honors, and you have come yourself to prove me in the wrong. You punish me by converting me to the truth."

"What truth?" asked Daphne, so low that Thane had to guess her question.

"Have you not proved to me that some women do have memories?"

Daphne could not meet his eyes; but she suspected him of something like sarcasm. She could not be sure, for his tone was agitating in its tenderness.

"All things considered," she said slowly, "does it not strike you as rather a costly conversion?"

"I don't say I was worth it, nor do I see just how it benefits me personally to have learned my lesson."

He rose, and stood where he could look at her, — an unfair advantage, for his dark face, strong in its immobility, was in silhouette

against the flush of twilight which illumined hers, so transparent in its sensitiveness.

"Is it not a good thing to believe, on any terms?" she tried to answer lightly.

"For some persons, perhaps. But my hopes, if I had any, would lie in the direction of disbelief."

"Disbelief?" she repeated confusedly. His keen eyes beat hers down.

"In woman's memory, constancy, — her constancy in youth, say? I am not talking of seasoned timber. I don't deserve to be happy, you see, and I look for no more than my deserts."

If he were mocking her now, only to test her! And if she should answer with a humble, blissful disclaimer? But she answered nothing, disclaimed nothing; suffered his suspicion, — his contempt, perhaps, for she felt that he read her through and through.

A widow is well, and a maid is well; but a maiden widow who trembles and looks down — in God's creation, what is she?

On the north side of the Snake, after climbing out of the cañon at Decker's Ferry, the cross-roads branch as per sign-post: "Thirty

miles to Shoshone Falls, one mile to Decker's Ferry. Good road." This last assertion must be true, as we have it on no less authority than that of Decker himself. Nothing is said of the road to Bliss, — not even that there is such a Bliss only sixteen miles away. Being a station on the Oregon Short Line, Bliss can take care of itself.

At these cross-roads, on a bright, windy September morning, our travelers had halted for reasons, the chief of which was to say good-by. They had slept over night at the ferry, parted their baggage in the morning, and now in separate wagons by divergent roads were setting forth on the last stage of their journey.

Daphne had left some necessary of her toilet at the ferry, and the driver of Mr. Withers's team had gone back to ask the people at the ferry-house to find it. This was the cause of their waiting at the cross-roads. Mr. Withers and Daphne were on their devoted way like conscientious tourists, though both were deadly weary, to prostrate themselves before the stupendous beauty of the great lone falls at Shoshone. Thane, with Kinney's team, was prosaically bound down the river to examine

and report on a placer-mine. But before his business would be finished Mr. Withers and his niece would have returned by railroad via Bliss to Boise, and have left that city for the East; so this was likely to be a long good-by.

If anything could have come of Mr. Withers's project of a memorial fountain at Pilgrim Station, there might have been a future to the acquaintance, for Thane was to have had charge of the execution of the design; but nature had lightly frustrated that fond, beneficent dream.

Mr. Kinney had offered the practical suggestion that the road should go to the fountain, since the fountain could not come to the road. Its course was a mere accident of the way the first wagon-wheels had gone. The wheels were few now, and with such an inducement might well afford to cross the gulch in a new place lower down. But Mr. Withers would have none of this dislocation of the unities. There was but one place — the dismal hollow itself, the scene of his heart's tragedy — where his acknowledgment to God should stand; his mute "Thy will be done!"

Perhaps the whole conception had lost

something of its hold on his mind by contact with such harsh realities as Daphne's disavowals and his own consequent struggle with a father's weakness. He had not in his inmost conscience quite done with that question yet.

Thane was touched by the meekness with which the old gentleman resigned his dream. The journey, he suspected, had been a disappointment in other ways, — had failed in impressiveness, in personal significance; had fallen at times below the level of the occasion, at others had overpowered it and swept it out of sight. Thane could have told him that it must be so. There was room for too many mourners in that primeval waste. Whose small special grief could make itself heard in that vast arid silence, the voice of which was God? God in nature, awful, inscrutable, alone, had gained a new meaning for Mr. Withers. Miles of desert, days of desert, like waves of brute oblivion had swept over him. Never before had he felt the oppression of purely natural causes, the force of the physical in conflict with the spiritual law. And now he was to submit to a final illustration of it, perhaps the simplest and most natural one of all.

Daphne was seated at a little distance on her camp-stool, making a drawing of the desert cross-roads with the twin sign-posts pointing separate ways, as an appropriate finish to her Snake River sketch-book. The sun was tremendous, the usual Snake River zephyr was blowing forty miles an hour, and the flinty ground refused to take the brass-shod point of her umbrella-staff. Mr. Kinney, therefore, sat beside her, gallantly steadying her heavy sketching-umbrella against the wind.

Mr. Withers, while awaiting the return of his own team from the ferry, had accepted a seat in Thane's wagon. (It was a bag containing a curling-iron, lamp, and other implements appertaining to "wimples and crisping-pins," that Daphne had forgotten, but she had not described its contents. One bag is as innocent as another, on the outside; it might have held her Prayer Book.)

Thane was metaphorically "kicking himself" because time was passing and he could not find words delicate enough in which to clothe an indelicate request,— one outrageous in its present connection, yet from some points of view, definitively his own, a most urgent and natural one.

"For one shall grasp, and one resign,
And God shall make the balance good."

To grasp is a simple act enough; but to do so delicately, reverently, without forcing one's preferences on those of another, may not always be so simple. Thane was not a Goth nor a Vandal; by choice he would have sought to preserve the amenities of life; but a meek man he was not, and the thing he now desired was, he considered, well worth the sacrifice of such small pretensions as his in the direction of unselfishness.

The founding of a family in its earliest stages is essentially an egoistic and ungenerous proceeding. Even Mr. Withers must have been self-seeking once or twice in his life, else had he never had a son to mourn. So, since life in this world is for the living, and his own life was likely to go on many years after Mr. Withers had been gathered to the reward of the righteous, Thane worked himself up to the grasping-point at last.

He was never able to reflect with any pride on the way in which he did it, and perhaps it is hardly fair to report him in a conversation that would have had its difficulties for almost any man; but his way of putting his case was

something like the following, — Mr. Withers guilelessly opening the way by asking, "You will be coming East, I hope, before long, Mr. Thane?"

"Possibly," said Thane, "I may run on to New York next winter."

"If you should, I trust you will find time to come a little further East and visit me? I could add my niece's invitation to my own, but she and her mother will probably have gone South for her mother's health. However, I will welcome you for us both, — I and my books, which are all my household now."

"Thanks, sir, I should be very glad to come; though your books, I 'm afraid, are the sort that would not have much to say to me."

"Come and see, come and see," Mr. Withers pressed him warmly. "A ripe farewell should always hold the seeds of a future meeting."

"That is very kindly said," Thane responded quickly; "and if you don't mind, I will plant one of those seeds right now."

"So do, so do," the old gentleman urged unsuspiciously.

"Your niece"— Thane began, but could see his way no further in that direction without too much precipitancy. Then he backed

down on a line of argument,—"I need not point out the fact," etc.,— and abandoned that as beset with too many pitfalls of logic, for one of his limited powers of analysis. Fewest words and simplest would serve him best. "It is hardly likely," then he said, "that your niece's present state of feeling will be respected as long as it lasts; there will be others with feelings of their own. Her loss will hardly protect her all her life from—she will have suitors, of course! Nature is a brute, and most men, young men, are natural in that respect,—in regard to women, I mean. I don't want to be the first fool who rushes in, but there will be a first. When he arrives, sir, will you let me know? If any man is to be heard, I claim the right to speak to her myself; the right, you understand, of one who loves her, who will make any sacrifice on earth to win her."

Mr. Withers remained silent. He had a sense of suffocation, as of waves of heat and darkness going over him. The wind sang in his ears, shouted and hooted at him. He was stunned. Presently he gasped, "Mr. Thane! you have not surely profaned this solemn journey with such thoughts as these?"

"A man cannot always help his thoughts, Mr. Withers. I have not profaned my thoughts by putting them into words, till now. I cannot do them justice, but I have made them plain. This is not a question of taste or propriety with me, or even decency. It is my life, — all of it I shall ever place at the disposal of any woman. I am not a boy; I know what I want and how much I want it. The secret of success is to be in the right place at the right time: here is where I ask your help."

"I do not question that you know what you want," said Mr. Withers mildly, — "it is quite a characteristic of the men of this region, I infer, — nor do I deny that you may know the way of success in getting it; but that I should open the door to you — be your — I might say accomplice, in this design upon the affections of my niece — why, I don't know how it strikes you, but"—

"It strikes me precisely as it does you, — my part of it," said Thane impatiently. "But her part is different, as I see it. If she were sick, you would not put off the day of her recovery because neither you nor yours could cure her? Whoever can make her forget this shipwreck of her youth, heal her unhappiness,

let him do so. Isn't that right? Give him the chance to try. A man's power in these things does not lie in his deserts. All I ask is, when other men come forward I want the same privilege. But I shall not be on the ground. When that time comes, sir, will you remember me?"

For once Mr. Withers seized the occasion for a retort; he advanced upon the enemy's exposed position. "Yes, Mr. Thane, I will remember you,— better than you remember your friends when they are gone."

Thane accepted the reproach as meekly as if his friendship for John Withers had been of the indubitable stuff originally that Mr. Withers had credited him with. He rather welcomed than otherwise an unmerited rebuke from that long-suffering quarter.

But though Thane was silenced as well as answered, there was conscience yet to deal with. Mr. Withers sat and meditated sorely, while the wind buffeted his gray hairs. Conscience demanded that he give up the secret of Daphne's false mourning, which he would have defended with his life. "A silence that can harm no one." "So long as we defraud no living person who might claim a right to

know your heart." The condition was plain; it provided for just such cases as the present. Then how could he hesitate? But he was human, and he did.

"I have gone too far, I see. Well, say no more about it," said Thane. "Your generosity tempted me. From those who give easily much shall be asked. Forget it, sir, please. I will look out for myself, or lose her."

"Stop a bit!" exclaimed Mr. Withers. He turned to Thane, placing his hand above his faded eyes to shade them from the glare, and looked his companion earnestly in the face. Thane sought for an umbrella, and raised it over the old gentleman's head; it was not an easy thing to hold it steady in that wind.

"Thanks, thanks! Now I can look at you. Yes, I can look you in the eye, in more senses than one. Listen to me, Mr. Thane, and don't mind if I am not very lucid. In speaking of the affairs of another, and a young woman, I can only deal in outlines. You will be able to surmise and hope the rest. I feel in duty bound to tell you that at the time of my son's death there was a misunderstanding on my part which forced Miss Lewis into a false position in respect to her relations to my son. Too

much was assumed by me on insufficient evidence, — a case where the wish, perhaps, was father to the thought. She hesitated at that sore time to rob me of an illusion which she saw was precious to me; she allowed me to retain my erroneous belief that my son, had he lived, would have enjoyed the blessing of her affection. As a fact, she had not given it to him, — could not have given it, — though she owns that her mind, not her heart, was wavering. Had she married him, other motives than love would have influenced her choice. So death has saved my dear boy from a cruel disappointment or a worse mistake, and her from a great danger. Had he lived, he must have had many hours of wretchedness, either with or without that dearest wish of his heart fulfilled.

"This she confessed to me not many days ago, after a long period of remorseful questioning; and I deem it my duty now, in view of what you have just told me, to acquaint you with the truth. I am the only one who knows that she was not engaged to my son, and never really loved him. The fact cut me so deeply, when I learned it first, that I persuaded her, most selfishly, to continue in the disguise she

had permitted, sustained so long,— to rest in it, that my boy's memory might be honored through this sacrifice of the truth. Weak, fond old man that I was, and worse! But now you have my confession. As soon as I can speak with her alone I will release her from that promise. She was fain to be free before all the world, — our little part of it, — but I fastened it on her. I see now that I could not have invented a crueler punishment; but it was never my purpose to punish her. I will also tell her that I have opened the true state of the case to you."

"Would you not stop just short of that, Mr. Withers? To know she is free to listen to him, — that is all any man could ask."

"Perhaps you are right; yes, she need not know that I have possessed you with her secret, — all of it that has any bearing on your hopes. I only thought it might save you, in her mind, from any possible imputation of — of want of respect for her supposed condition, akin to widowhood; but no doubt you will wait a suitable time."

"I will wait till we meet in Boise."

"In Boise!" the old gentleman cried, aghast.

"That will be three days from now," an-

swered Thane innocently. Did Mr. Withers imagine that he would wait three years!

"But what becomes of the — the placer-mine?"

"The placer-mine be — the placer-mine will keep! She is shutting up her book; the sketch is finished. Will you hold the umbrella, sir, or shall I put it down?"

Mr. Withers took hold of the umbrella handle; the wind shook it and nearly tugged it out of his grasp. "Put it down, if you please," he murmured resignedly. But by this time Thane was half across the road to where Daphne, with penknife and finger-tips, was trying to strip the top layer of blackened sandpaper from her pencil-scrubber; turning her face aside, because, woman-like, she would insist on casting her pencil-dust to windward.

Thane smiled, and took the scrubber out of her hands, threw away the soiled sheet, sealed up the pad in a clean stamped envelope, which bore across the end the legend, "If not delivered within ten days, return to" — "Robert Henry Thane," he wrote, with his address, and gave her back her property. It was all very childish, yet his hand trembled as he wrote;

and Daphne looked on with the solemnity of a child learning a new game.

"May I see the sketch?" he asked.

They bent together over her book, while Daphne endeavored to find the place; the wind fluttered the leaves, and she was so long in finding it that Mr. Kinney had time to pack up her stool and umbrella, and cross the road to say good-by to Mr. Withers.

"Here it is," said Thane, catching sight of the drawing. He touched the book-holder lightly on the arm, to turn her away from the sun. Her shadow fell across the open page; their backs were to the wagon. So they stood a full half-minute, — Thane seeing nothing, hearing his heart beat preposterously in the silence.

"Why don't you praise my sign-posts?" asked Daphne nervously. "See my beautiful distance, — one straight line!"

"I have changed my plans a little," said Thane. Daphne closed the book. "I shall see you again in Boise. This is good-by — for three days. Take care of yourself." He held out his hand. "I shall meèt your train at Bliss."

"Bliss! Where is Bliss?"

"You never could remember, could you?" he smiled. The tone of his voice was a flagrant caress. The color flew to Daphne's face. "Bliss," said he, "is where I shall meet you again: remember that, will you?"

Daphne drew down her veil. The man returning from the ferry was in sight at the top of the hill. Mr. Withers was alighting from Thane's wagon. She turned her gray mask towards him, through which he could discern the soft outline of her face, the color of her lips and cheeks, the darkness of her eyes; their expression he could not see.

"I shall meet you at Bliss," he repeated, his fingers closing upon hers.

Daphne did not reply; she did not speak to him nor look at him again, though it was some moments before the wagon started.

Kinney and Thane remained at the cross-roads, discussing with some heat the latter's unexpected change of plan. Mr. Kinney had a small interest in the placer-mine, himself, but it looked large to him just then. He put little faith in Thane's urgent business (that no one had heard of till that moment) calling him to Boise in three days. Of what use was it going down to the placers only to turn round and

come back again? So Thane thought, and proposed they drive forward to Bliss.

"Bliss be hanged!" said Mr. Kinney; which shows how many ways there are of looking at the same thing.

Thane's way prevailed; they drove straight on to Bliss. And if the placer-mine was ever reported on by Thane, it must have been at a later time.

PILGRIMS TO MECCA

PILGRIMS TO MECCA

"NOTICE the girl on your right, Elsie. That is the thing! You have to see it to understand. Do you understand, dear? Do you see the difference?"

A middle-aged little mother, with a sensitive, care-worn face, leaned across the Pullman section and laid a hand upon her daughter's by way of emphasis — needless, for her voice and manner conveyed all, and much more than the words could possibly carry. Volumes of argument, demonstration, expostulation were implied.

"Can you see her? Do you see what I mean? What, dear?"

The questions followed one another like beads running down a string. Elsie's silence was the knot at the end. She opened her eyes and turned them languidly as directed, but without raising her head from the back of the car-seat.

"I will look presently, mother. I can't see much of anything now."

"Oh, never mind. Forgive me, dear. How is your head? Lie still; don't try to talk."

Elsie smiled, patted her mother's hand, and closed her narrow, sweet, sleepy blue eyes. Mrs. Valentin never looked at them, when her mind was at rest, without wishing they were a trifle larger — wider open, rather. The eyes were large enough, but the lazy lids shut them in. They saw a good deal, however. She also wished, in moments of contemplation, that she could have laid on a little heavier the brush that traced Elsie's eyebrows, and continued them a little longer at the temples. Then, her upper lip was, if anything, the least bit too short. Yet what a sweet, concentrated little mouth it was, — reticent and pure, and not over-ready with smiles, though the hidden teeth were small, flawless, and of baby whiteness! Yes, the mother sighed, just a touch or two, — and she knew just where to put those touches, — and the girl had been a beauty. If nature would only consult the mothers at the proper time, instead of going on in her blind-fold fashion!

But, after all, did they want a beauty in the family? On theory, no: the few beauties Mrs. Valentin had known in her life had not

been the happiest of women. What they did want was an Elsie — their own Elsie — perfectly trained without losing her naturalness, perfectly educated without losing her health, perfectly dressed without thinking of clothes, perfectly accomplished without wasting her time, and, finally, an Elsie perfectly happy. All that parents, situated on the wrong side of the continent for art and culture, and not over-burdened with money, could do to that end, Mrs. Valentin was resolved should be done. Needless to say, very little was to be left to God.

Mrs. Valentin was born in the East, some forty-odd years before this educational pilgrimage began, of good Unitarian stock, — born with a great sense of personal accountability. She could not have thrown it off and been joyful in the words, "It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves."

Elsie had got a headache from the early start and the suppressed agitation of parting from her home and her father. Suppression was as natural to her as expression was to her mother. The father and daughter had held each other silently a moment; both had smiled, and both were ill for hours afterward.

But Mrs. Valentin thought that in Elsie's case it was because she had not sent the girl to bed earlier the night before, and insisted on her eating something at breakfast.

Herself — she had lain sleepless for the greater part of that night and many nights previous. She had anticipated in its difficulties every stage of the getting off, the subsequent journey, the arrival, their reception by Eastern relatives not seen for years, the introduction of her grown-up daughter, the impression she would make, the beginning of life all over again in a strange city. (She had known her Boston once, but that was twenty years ago.) She foresaw the mistakes she would inevitably make in her choice of means to the desired ends — dressmakers, doctors, specialists of all sorts; the horrible way in which school expenses mount up; the trivial yet poignant comparisons of school life, from which, if Elsie suffered, she would be sure to suffer in silence.

After this fatiguing mental rehearsal she had risen at six, while the electric lights were still burning and the city was cloaked in fog. It was San Francisco of a midsummer morning; fog whistles groaning, sidewalks slippery with wet, and the gray-green trees and tinted

flower-beds of the city gardens emerging like the first broad washes of a water-color laid in with a full brush.

She had taken a last survey of her dismantled home, given the last directions to the old Chinese servant left in charge, presided haggardly at the last home breakfast — what a ghastly little ceremony it was! Then Mr. Valentin had gone across the Oakland ferry with them and put them aboard the train, muffled up as for winter. They had looked into each other's pale faces and parted for two years, all for Elsie's sake. But what Elsie thought about it — whether she understood or cared for what this sacrifice of home and treasure was to purchase — it was impossible to learn. Still more what her father thought. What he had always said was, "You had better go."

"But do you truly think it *is* the best thing for the child?"

"I think that, whatever we do, there will be times when we 'll wish we had done something different; and there will be other times when we shall be glad we did not. All we can do is the best we know up to date."

"But do you think it is the best?"

"I think, Emmy, that you will never be satisfied until you have tried it, and it 's worth the money to me to have you feel that you have done your best."

Mrs. Valentin sighed. "Sometimes I wonder why we do cling to that old fetich of the East. Why can't we accept the fact that we are Western people? The question is, Shall we be the self-satisfied kind or the unsatisfied kind? Shall we be contented and limited, or discontented and grow?"

"I guess we shall be limited enough, either way," Mr. Valentin retorted easily. He had no hankering for the East and no grudge against fate for making him a Western man *malgré lui*. "I've known kickers who did n't appear to grow much, except to grow cranky," he said.

Up to the moment of actual departure, Mrs. Valentin had continued to review her decision and to agonize over its possibilities of disaster; but now that the journey had begun, she was experiencing the rest of change and movement. She was as responsive as a child to fresh outward impressions, and the hyperbolical imagination that caused her such torture when it wrought in the dark hours on

the teased fabric of her own life, could give her compensating pleasures by daylight, on the open roads of the world. There was as yet nothing outside the car windows which they had not known of old, — the marsh-meadows of the Lower Sacramento, tide-rivers reflecting the sky, cattle and wild fowl, with an occasional windmill or a duck-hunter's lodge breaking the long sweeps of low-toned color. The morning sun was drinking up the fog, the temperature in the Pullman steadily rising. Jackets were coming off and shirt-waists blooming out in summer colors, giving the car a homelike appearance.

It was a saying that summer, "By their belts ye shall know them." Shirt-waists no longer counted, since the ready-made ones for two dollars and a half were almost as chic as the tailor-made for ten. But the belts, the real belts, were inimitable. Sir Lancelot might have used them for his bridle —

> "Like to some branch of stars we see
> Hung in the golden galaxy."

Mrs. Valentin had looked with distinct approval on a mother and daughter who occupied the section opposite. Their impedimenta and belongings were "all right," arguing per-

sons with cultivated tastes, abroad for a summer spent in divers climates, who knew what they should have and where to get it. A similarity of judgment on questions of clothes and shops is no doubt a bond between strange women everywhere; but it was the daughter's belt-buckle before which Mrs. Valentin bowed down and humbled herself in silence. The like of that comes only by inheritance or travel. Antique, pale gold — Cellini might have designed it. There was probably not another buckle like that one in existence. An imitation? No more than its wearer, a girl as white as a white camellia, with gray eyes and thin black eyebrows, and thick black lashes that darkened the eyes all round. There was nothing noticeable in her dress except its freshness and a certain finish in lesser details, understood by the sophisticated. "Swell" was too common a word for her supreme and dainty elegance. Her resemblance to the ordinary full-fleshed type of Pacific coast belle was that of a portrait by Romney — possibly engraved by Cole — to a photograph of some *reina de la fiesta*. This was Mrs. Valentin's exaggerated way of putting it to herself. Such a passionate conservative as she was sure to be prejudiced.

The mother had a more pronounced individuality, as mothers are apt to have, and looked quite fit for the ordinary uses of life. She was of the benignant Roman-nosed Eastern type, daughter of generations of philanthropists and workers in the public eye for the public good; a deep, rich voice, an air of command, plain features, abundant gray hair, imported clothes, wonderful, keen, dark eyes overlapped by a fold of the crumpled eyelid,— a personage, a character, a life, full of complex energies and domineering good sense. With gold eye-glasses astride her high-bridged nose, knees crossed, one large, well-shod foot extended, this mother in Israel sat absorbed like a man in the daily paper, and wroth like a man at its contents. Occasionally she would emit an impatient protest in the deep, maternal tones, and the graceful daughter would turn her head and read over her shoulder in silent assent.

"How trivial, how self-centred we are!" Mrs. Valentin murmured, leaning across to claim a look from Elsie. "I realize it the moment we get outside our own little treadmill. We do nothing but take thought for what we shall eat and drink and wherewithal we shall

be clothed. I have n't thought of the country once this morning. I 've been wondering if all the good summer things are gone at Hollander's. It may be very hot in Boston the first few weeks. You will be wilted in your cloth suit."

"Oh, mammy, mammy! what a mammy!" purred Elsie, her pretty upper lip curling in the smile her mother loved — with a reservation. Elsie had her father's sense of humor, and had caught his half-caressing way of indulging it at the "intense" little mother's expense.

"Elsie," she observed, "you know *I* don't mind your way of speaking to me, — as if I were the girl of sixteen and you the woman of forty, — but I hope you won't use it before the aunts and cousins. I shall be sure to lay myself open, but, dear, be careful. It is n't very good form to be too amused with one's mother. Of course there 's as much difference in mothers as in girls," Mrs. Valentin acknowledged. "A certain sort of temperament interferes with the profit one ought to get out of one's experience. If you had my temperament I should n't waste this two years' experiment on you; I should know that nothing

could change your — spots. But *you* will learn — everything. How is your head, dear — what?"

Elsie had said nothing; she had not had the opportunity.

At a flag station where the train was halted (this overland train was a "local" as far as Sacramento) Mrs. Valentin looked out and saw a colored man in livery climb down from the back seat of a mail-cart and hasten across the platform with a huge paper box. It proved to be filled with magnificent roses, of which he was the bearer to the ladies opposite. A glance at a card was followed by gracious acknowledgments, and the footman retired beaming. He watched the train off, hat in hand, bowing to the ladies at their window as only a well-raised colored servant can bow.

"The Coudert place lies over there," said Mrs. Valentin, pointing to a mass of dark trees toward which the trap was speeding. "They have been staying there," she whispered, "doing the west coast, I suppose, with invitations to all the swell houses."

"Is your daughter not well?" the deep voice spoke across the car.

As Elsie could not ride backward, her mo-

ther, to give her room, and for the pleasure of watching her, was seated with her own back to the engine, facing most of the ladies in the car.

"She is a little train-sick; she could not eat this morning, and that always gives her a headache."

Elsie raised her eyelashes in faint dissent.

"She should eat something, surely. Have you tried malted milk? I have some of the lozenges; she can take one without raising her head."

Search was made in a distinguished-looking bag, Mrs. Valentin protesting against the trouble, and beseeching Elsie with her eyes to accept one from the little silver box of pastils that was passed across the aisle.

Elsie said she really could not — thanks very much.

The keen, dark eyes surveyed her with the look of a general inspecting raw troops, and Mrs. Valentin felt as depressed as the company officer who has been "working up" the troops. "Won't you try one, Elsie?" she pleaded.

"I'd rather not, mother," said Elsie.

She did not repeat her thanks to the great

authority, but left her mother to cover her retreat.

"The young girls nowadays do pretty much as they please about eating or not eating," observed the Eastern matron, in her large, impersonal way. "They can match our theories with quite as good ones of their own." She smiled again at Elsie, and the overtures on that side ceased.

"*I* would have eaten any imaginable thing she offered me," sighed Mrs. Valentin, "but Elsie is so hard to impress. I cannot understand how a girl, a baby, who has never been anywhere or seen anything, can be so fearfully *posée*. It's the Valentin blood. It's the drop of Indian blood away, 'way back. It's their impassiveness, but it's awfully good form — when she grows up to it."

After this, Mrs. Valentin sat silent for such an unnatural length of time that Elsie roused herself to say something encouraging.

"I shall be all right, mother, after Sacramento. We will take a walk. The fresh air is all I need."

She was as good as her word. The cup of tea and the twenty minutes' stroll made such a happy difference that Mrs. Valentin sent a

telegram to her husband to say that Elsie's head was better and that she had forgotten her trunk keys, and would he express them to her at once.

So much refreshed was Elsie that her mother handed her the letters which had come to her share of that morning's mail. There were four or five of them, addressed in large, girlish hands, and exhibiting the latest and most expensive fads in stationery. Over one of them Elsie gave a shriek of delight, an outburst so unexpected and out of character with her former self that their distinguished fellow travelers involuntarily looked up, — and Mrs. Valentin blushed for her child.

"Oh, mammy, how rich! How just like Gladys! She kept it for a last surprise! Mother, Gladys is going to Mrs. Barrington's herself."

The mother's face fell.

"Indeed!" she said, forcing a tone of pleasure. "Well, it's a compliment — on both sides. Mrs. Barrington is very particular whom she takes, and the Castants are sparing nothing that money can do for Gladys."

"Oh, what fun!" cried Elsie, her face transformed. "Poor Gladys! she 'll have a per-

fectly awful time too, and we can sympathize."

"Are you expecting to have an 'awful time,' Elsie," — the mother looked aghast, — "and are you going to throw yourself into the arms of Gladys for sympathy? Then let me say, my daughter, that neither Mrs. Barrington nor any one else can do much for your improvement, and all the money we are spending will be thrown away. If you are going East to ally yourself exclusively with Californian girls, to talk California and think California and set yourself against everything that is not Californian, we might just as well take the first train west at Colfax."

"But am I to be different to Gladys when we meet away from home?" Elsie's sensitive eyes clouded. Her brows went up.

"Of course not. Gladys is a dear, delightful girl. I 'm as fond of her as you are. But you can have Gladys all the rest of your life, I hope. I 'm not a snob, dear, but I do think we should recognize the fact that some acquaintances are more improving than others."

"And cultivate them for the sake of what they can do for us?"

In Elsie's voice there was an edge of resist-

ance, hearing which her mother, when she was wise, would let speech die and silence do its work. Her influence with the girl was strongest when least insisted upon. She was not wiser than usual that morning, but the noise of the train made niceties of statement impossible. She abandoned the argument perforce, and Elsie, left with her retort unanswered, acknowledged its cheapness in her own quick, strong, wordless way.

The dining-car would not be attached to the train until they reached Ogden. At twilight they stopped "twenty minutes for refreshment," and the Valentins took the refreshment they needed most by pacing the platform up and down,— the tall daughter, in her severely cut clothes, shortening her boyish stride to match her mother's step ; the mother, looking older than she need, in a light-gray traveling-cap, with Elsie's golf cape thrown over her silk waist.

The Eastern travelers were walking too. They had their tea out of an English tea-basket, and bread and butter from the buffet, and were independent of supper stations. With the Valentins it was sheer improvidence and want of appetite.

"Please notice that girl's step," said Mrs. Valentin, pressing Elsie's arm. "'Art is to conceal art.' It has taken years of the best of everything, and eternal vigilance besides, to create such a walk as that; but *c'est fait.* You don't see the entire sole of her foot every time she takes a step."

"Having a certain other person's soles in view, mammy?"

"I'm afraid I should have them in full view if you came to meet me. Not the heel quite so pronounced, dearest."

"Oh, mother, please leave that to Mrs. Barrington! Let us be comrades for these few days."

"Dearest, it would be the happiness of my life to be never anything but a comrade. But who is to nag a girl if not her mother? I very much doubt if Mrs. Barrington will condescend to speak of your boot-soles. She will expect all that to have been attended to long ago."

"It has been — a thousand years ago. Sometimes I feel that I'm all boot-soles."

"The moment I see some rèsult, dear, I shall be satisfied. One does n't speak of such things for their own sake."

"Can't we get a paper?" asked Elsie. "What is that they are shouting?"

"I don't think it can be anything new. We brought these papers with us on the train. But we can see. No; it 's just what we had this morning. They are preparing for a general assault. There will be heavy fighting to-morrow. Why, that is to-day!" Mrs. Valentin held the newspaper at arm's length.

"Is there anything more? I can read only the head-lines."

The girl took the paper and looked at it with a certain reluctance, narrowing her eyelids.

"Mother, there was something else in Gladys's letter. Billy Castant has enlisted with the Rough Riders. He was in that fight at Las Guasimas, while we were packing our trunks. He did badly again in his exams, and he — he did n't go home; he just enlisted."

"The foolish fellow!" Mrs. Valentin exclaimed. A sharp intuition told her there was trouble in the wind, and defensively she turned upon the presumptive cause. "The foolish boy! What he needs is an education. But he won't work for it. It 's easier to go off mad and be a Rough Rider."

"I don't think it was easy at Las Guasimas,"

Elsie said, with a strained little laugh. "You remember the last war, mother; did you belittle your volunteers?"

Mrs. Valentin listened with a catch in her breath. What did this portend? So slight a sign as that in Elsie meant tears and confessions from another girl.

"And did you hear of this only just now, from Gladys's letter?"

"Yes, mother."

"You extraordinary child — your father all over again! I might have known by the way you laughed over that letter that you had bad news to tell — or keep to yourself."

"I don't call that bad news, do you, mother? He does need an education, but he will never get it out of books."

"Well, it's a pretty severe sort of education for his parents — nineteen, an only son, and to go without seeing them again. He might at least have come home and enlisted from his own State."

They were at the far end of the platform, facing the dark of the pine-clad ravines. Deep, odorous breaths of night wind came sighing up the slopes.

"Mother, there was something happened

last winter that I never told you," Elsie began again, with pauses. "It was so silly, and there seemed no need to speak of it. But I can't bear not to speak now. I don't know if it has made any difference — with Billy's plans. It seems disloyal to tell you. But you must forget it: he 's forgotten, I am sure. He said — those silly things, you know! I could n't have told you then; it was too silly. And I said that I did n't think it was for him or for me to talk about such things. It was for men and women, not boys who could n't even get their lessons."

"Elsie!" Mrs. Valentin gave a little choked laugh. "Did you say that? The poor boy! Why, I thought you were such good friends!"

"He was n't talking friendship, mother, and I was furious with him for flunking his exams. He passed in only five out of seven. He ought to have done better than that. He 's not stupid; it 's that fatal popularity. He 's captain of this and manager of that, and they give him such a lot of money. And they pet him, too; they make excuses for him all the time. I told him he must *do* something before he began to have feelings. The only feeling he had any right to have was shame for his miserable record."

"And that was all the encouragement you gave him?"

"If you call that 'encouragement,'" said Elsie.

"You did very well, my dear; but I suppose you know it was the most intimate thing you could have said to him, the greatest compliment you could pay him. If he ever does make any sort of a record, you have given him the right to come back to you with it."

"He will never come back to me without it," said the girl. "But it was nothing — nothing! All idleness and nonsense, and the music after supper that went to his head."

"I hope it was nothing more than "— Mrs. Valentin checked herself. There were things she said to her husband which sometimes threatened to slip out inadvertently when his youthful copy was near. "Well, I see nothing to be ashamed of, on your side. But such things are always a pity. They age a girl in spite of herself. And the boys — they simply forget. The rebuke does them good, but they forget to whom they owe it. It 's just one of those things that make my girlie older. But oh, how fast life comes!"

Elsie slipped her hand under her mother's cloak, and Mrs. Valentin pressed her own down hard upon it.

"We must get aboard, dear. But I 'm so glad you told me! And I did n't mean quite what I said about Billy's 'going off mad.' He has given all he had to give, poor boy; why he gave it is his own affair."

"I hope — what I told you — has made no difference about his coming home. It 's stupid of me to think it. But hard words come back, don't they, mother? Hard words — to an old friend!"

"Billy is all right, dear; and it was so natural you should be tried with him! 'For to be wroth with one we '" — Mrs. Valentin had another of her narrow escapes. "Come, there is the porter waiting for us."

"Mother," said Elsie sternly, "please don't misunderstand. I should never have spoken of this if I had been 'wroth' with him — in that way."

"Of course not, dear; I understand. And it would never do, anyway, for father does n't like the blood."

"Father does n't like the — what, mother?"

Elsie asked the question half an hour later,

as they sat in an adjoining section, waiting for their berths to be made up.

"What, dear?"

"What did you say father does n't like — in the Castants?"

"Oh, the blood, the family. This generation is all right — apparently. But blood will tell. You are too young to know all the old histories that fathers and mothers read young people by."

"I think we are what we are," said Elsie; "we are not our great-grandfathers."

"In a measure we are, and it should teach us charity. Not as much can be expected of Billy Castant, coming of the stock he does, as you might expect of that ancestry," and Mrs. Valentin nodded toward the formidable Eastern contingent. (Elsie was consciously hating them already.) "The fountain can rise no higher than its source."

"I thought there was supposed to be a source a little higher than the ground — unless we are no more than earth-born fountains."

"'Out of the mouth of babes,'" said Mrs. Valentin, laughing gently. "I own it, dear. Middle age is suspicious and mean and un-

spiritual and troubled about many things. A middle-aged mother is like an old hen when hawks are sailing around; she can't see the sky."

"Yes," said Elsie, settling cosily against her mother's shoulder. "I always know when mammy speaks as my official mother, and when she is talking 'straight talk.' I shall be so happy when she believes I am old enough to hear only straight talk."

"I 've got a surprise for you, Elsie," said Mrs. Valentin, a day and a night eastward of the Sierras. They were on the Great Plains, at that stage of an overland journey which suggests, in the words of a clever woman, the advisability of "taking a tuck in the continent."

Elsie's eyebrows seemed to portend that surprises are not always pleasant.

"I 've been talking with our Eastern lady, and imagine! her daughter is one of Mrs. Barrington's girls too. This will be her second year. So there is" —

"An offset to Gladys," Elsie interrupted.

"So there is a chance for you to know one girl, at least, of the type I 've always been

holding up to you, always believed in, though the individuals are so rare."

Elsie's sentiments, unexpressed, were that she wished they might be rarer. Not that the flower of Eastern culture was not all her mother protested she was; but there are crises of discouragement on the upward climb of trying to realize a mother's ambitions for one's self, when one is only a girl — the only girl, on whom the family experiments are all to be wreaked. Elsie suffered in silence many a pang that her mother never dreamed of — pangs of effort unavailing and unappreciated. She wished to conform to her mother's exigent standard, but she could not, all at once, and be a girl too — a girl of sixteen, a little off the key physically, not having come to a woman's repose of movement; a little stridulous mentally, but pulsing with life's dumb music of aspiration; as intense as her mother in feeling, without her mother's power to throw off the strain in words.

"Well, mother?" she questioned.

"She is older than you, and she will be at home. The advances, of course, must come from her, but I hope, dear, you will not be — you will try to be responsive?"

"I never know, mother, when I am not responsive. It 's like wrinkling my forehead; it does itself."

Mrs. Valentin made a gesture expressive of the futility of argument under certain not unfamiliar conditions.

"'You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink.' I am leading my Pegasus to the fountain of — what was the fountain?"

Elsie laughed. "Your Pegasus is pretty heavy on the wing, mammy. But I will drink. I will gorge myself, truly I will. The money shall not be spent in vain."

"Oh, the money! Who cares about the money? — if only there were more of it."

They stopped over night in Chicago, and Mrs. Valentin bought some shirt-waists; for the heat had "doubled up on them," as a Kansas farmer on the train remarked.

Elsie trailed about the shops with her mother, not greatly interested in shirt-waists or bargains in French underclothing.

The war pressure seemed to close in upon them as they left the mid-West and drew toward the coast once more. The lists from El Caney were throbbing over the wires, and the

country, so long immune from peril and suffering, was awakening to the cost of victory. There was a terrible flippancy in the irrepressible spirit of trade which had seized upon the nation's emblems, freshly consecrated in the blood of her sons, and was turning them to commercial account, — advertising, in symbols of death and priceless devotion, that ribbons or soap or candy were for sale. The flag was, so to speak, dirt-cheap. You could wear it in a hatband or a necktie; you could deface it, or tear it in two, in opening an envelope addressed to you by your bootmaker.

Elsie cast hunted eyes on the bulletin boards. She knew by heart that first list after Las Guasimas. One glance had burned it in forever. It had become one of the indelible scars of a lifetime. Yet those were the names of strangers. If a whiff from an avalanche can fell trees a mile away, how if the avalanche strike you?

They returned to their hotel, exhausted, yet excited, by the heat; and Mrs. Valentin admonished herself of what our boys must be suffering in that " unimaginable climate," and she entered into details, forgetting to spare Elsie, till the girl turned a sickly white.

It was then the bishop's card was sent up — their own late bishop, much mourned and deplored because he had been transferred to an Eastern diocese. There could be no one so invariably welcome, who knew so well, without effort, how to touch the right chord, whether in earnest or in jest that sometimes hid a deeper earnest. His manner at first usually hovered between the two, your own mood determining where the emphasis should rest. He had brought with him the evening paper, but he kept it folded in his hand.

"So you are pilgrims to Mecca," he said, looking from mother to daughter with his gentle, musing smile. "But are you not a little early for the Eastern schools?"

"There are the home visits first, and the clothes," said Mrs. Valentin.

"And where do you stop, and for how long?"

"Boston, for one year, Bishop, and then we go abroad for a year, perhaps."

"Bless me! what has Elsie done that she should be banished from home for two years?"

"She takes her mother with her."

"Yes; that is half of the home. Perhaps that 's as much as one girl ought to expect."

"The fathers are so busy, Bishop."

"Yes; the fathers do seem to be busy. So Elsie is going East to be finished? And how old is she now? How does she presume to account for the fact that she is taller than her mother and nearly as tall as her bishop?"

Elsie promptly placed herself at the bishop's side and "measured," glancing over her shoulder at him in the glass. He turned and gravely placed his hand upon her head.

"I thought of writing to you at one time," said Mrs. Valentin, "but of course you cannot keep us all on your mind. We are a 'back number.'"

"She thought I would have forgotten who these Valentins were," said the bishop, smiling.

"No; but you cannot keep the thread of all our troubles — the sheep of the old flock and the lambs of the new. I have had a thousand minds lately about Elsie, but this was the original plan, made years ago, when we were young and sure about things. Don't you think young lives need room, Bishop? Ought n't we to seek to widen their mental horizons?"

"The horizons widen, they widen of themselves, Mrs. Valentin — very suddenly sometimes, and beyond our ken." The bishop's

voice had struck a deeper note; he paused and looked at Elsie with eyes so kind and tender that the girl choked and turned away. "This war is rather a widening business, and California is getting her share. Our boys of the First, for instance, — you see I still call them *our* boys, — what were they doing a year ago, and what are they doing now? I 'll be bound half of them a year ago did n't know how 'Philippines' was spelled."

Mrs. Valentin became restless.

"Is that the evening paper?" she asked.

The bishop glanced at the paper. "And who," said he, "is to open the gates of sunrise for our Elsie? With whom do you intend to place her in Boston?"

"Oh, with Mrs. Barrington."

Mrs. Valentin was watching the bishop, whose eyes still rested upon Elsie.

"She is to be one of the chosen five, is she? The five wise virgins — of the East? But they are all Western virgins this year, I believe."

"If you mean that they are all from the Western States, I think you are mistaken, Bishop."

"Am I? Let us see. There is Elsie, and

Gladys Castant, perhaps, and the daughters of my friend Mr. Laws of West Dakota " —

"Bishop!"

"Of West Dakota; that makes four. And then the young lady who was on the train with you, Miss Bigelow, from Los Angeles."

"Bishop! I am certain you are mistaken there. If those people are not Eastern, then I'm from West Dakota myself!"

"We are all from West Dakota virtually, so far as Mecca is concerned. But Mrs. Barrington offers her young ladies those exceptional social opportunities which Western girls are supposed to need. If you want Elsie to be with Eastern girls of the East, let her go to a good Boston Latin school. Did you not go to one yourself, Mrs. Valentin?"

Mrs. Valentin laughed. "That was ages ago, and I was at home. I had the environment — an education in itself. Won't you dine with us, Bishop? We shall have dinner in half an hour."

"In half an hour I must be on the limited express. You seem to have made different connections."

"'The error was, we started wrong,'" said Mrs. Valentin lightly. "We took the morn-

ing instead of the evening train. But I was convinced we should be left, and I preferred to get left by the wrong train and have the right one to fall back on." She ceased her babble, as vain words die when there is a sense of no one listening.

Elsie stood at the window looking back into the room. She thought, "Mother does n't know what she is saying. What is she worried about?"

The bishop was writing with a gold pencil on the margin of the newspaper. He folded it with the writing on top.

"If you had consulted me about that child," — he looked at Elsie, — "I should have said, 'Do not hurry her — do not hurry her. Her education will come as God sends it.' With experience, as with death, it is the prematureness that hurts."

His beautiful voice and perfect accent filled the silence with heart-warmed cadences.

"Well, good-by, Mrs. Valentin. Remember me to that busy husband."

Mrs. Valentin rose; the bishop took her hand. "Elsie will see me to the elevator. This is the evening paper."

He offered it with the writing toward her.

Mrs. Valentin read what he had written: "Billy Castant was killed in the charge at San Juan. Every man in that fight deserves the thanks of the nation."

"Come, Elsie, see me to my carriage," the bishop was saying. He placed the girl's hand on his arm and led her out of the room. At the elevator grating they waited a moment; the cold draft up the shaft fanned the hair back from Elsie's forehead as she stood looking down, watching the ascent of the cage.

"It would be a happy thing," said the bishop, "if parents could always go with their children on these long roads of experience; but there are some roads the boys and the girls will have to take alone. We shall all meet at the other end, though — we shall all meet at the end."

Elsie walked up and down the hall awhile, dreading to go back to the room. A band in the street below was playing an old war-song of the sixties, revived this battle summer of '98, — a song that was sung when the cost of that war was beginning to tell, "We shall meet, but we shall miss him." Elsie knew the music; she had not yet learned the words.

Next morning Mr. Valentin received one

of his wife's vague but thrifty telegrams, dated at Chicago, on Sunday night, July 3:

"We cannot go through with it. Expect us home Wednesday."

Mrs. Valentin had spent hours, years, in explaining to Elsie's father the many cogent and crying reasons for taking her East to be finished. It needed not quite five minutes to explain why she had brought her back.

Strangely, none of the friends of the family asked for an explanation of this sudden change of plan. But Elsie envies Gladys her black clothes, and the privilege of crying in public when the bands play and the troops go by.

"Such children — such mere children!" Mrs. Valentin sighs.

But she no longer speaks to Elsie about wrinkling her forehead or showing her boot-soles. It is eye to eye and heart to heart, and only straight talk between them now, as between women who know.

THE HARSHAW BRIDE

THE HARSHAW BRIDE

[Mrs. Tom Daly, of Bisuka in the Northwest, writes to her invalid sister spending the summer on the coast of Southern California.]

I

You know I am always ready to sacrifice truth to politeness, if the truth is of that poor, stingy upstart variety everybody is familiar with and if the occasion warrants the expense. We all know politeness is not cheap, any more than honesty is politic. But surely I mistook my occasion, one day last winter — and now behold the price!

We are to have a bride on our hands, or a bride-elect, for she is n't married yet. The happy man to be is rustling for a home out here in the wilds of Idaho while she is waiting in the old country for success to crown his efforts. How much success in her case is demanded one does not know. She is a little English girl, upper middle class, which Mrs. Percifer assures us is *the* class to belong to in England

at the present day, — from which we infer that it 's her class; and the interesting reunion is to take place at our house — the young woman never having seen us in her life before.

She sailed, poor thing, this day week and will be forwarded to us by her confiding friends in New York as soon as she arrives. Meantime she will have heard from us from the Percifers: that is something.

Really they were very nice to us in New York, last winter, the Percifers — though one must not plume one's self too much. It began as a business flirtation down town between the husbands, and then Tom confidingly mentioned that he had a wife at his hotel. We unfortunate women were dragged into it forthwith, and more or less forced to live up to it. I cannot say there was anything riotous in the way she sustained her part. She was so very impersonal in fact, when we said good-by, that my natural tendency to invite people to come and stay with us, on the spur of any moment, was strangled in my throat.

But one must say something by way of retaliation for hospitality one cannot reject. So I put it off on any friends of theirs who might have occasion to command us in the

West. We should be so happy, and so forth. And, my dear, she has taken me up on it! She 's not impersonal now. She is so glad — for dear Kitty's sake — that we are here, and she is sure we will be very good to her — such a sweet girl, no one could help being — which rather cuts down the margin for our goodness. The poor child — I am quoting Mrs. Percifer — knows absolutely no one in the West but the man she is coming to marry (?) and can have no conception of the journey she has before her. She will be *so* comforted to find us at the end of it. And if anything unforeseen should occur to delay Mr. Harshaw, the fiancé, and prevent his meeting her train, it will be a vast relief to Kitty's friends to know that the dear brave little girl is in good hands — ours, if you can conceive it!

Please observe the coolness with which she treats his *not* meeting that train, after the girl has traversed half the globe to compass her share of their meeting.

Well, it 's not the American way; but perhaps it will be when bad times have humbled us a little more, and the question is whether we can marry our daughters at all unless we can give them dowries, or professions to support

their husbands on, and "feelings" are a luxury only the rich can afford.

I hope "Kitty" won't have any; but still more I hope that her young man will arrive on schedule time, and that they can trot round the corner and be married, with Tom and me for witnesses, as speedily as possible.

I 've had such a blow! Tom, with an effort, has succeeded in remembering this Mr. Harshaw who is poor Kitty's fate. He must have been years in this country, — long enough to have citizenized himself and become a member of our first Idaho legislature (I don't believe you even know that we are a State!). Tom was on the supper committee of the ball the city gave them. They were a deplorable set of men; it was easy enough to remember the nice ones. Tom says he is a "chump," if you know what that means. I tell him that every man, married or single, is constitutionally horrid to any other man who has had the luck to be chosen of a charming girl. But I 'm afraid Harshaw was n't one of the nice ones, or I should have remembered him myself; we had them to dinner — all who were at all worth while.

Poor Kitty! There is so little here to come for *but* the man.

Well, my dear, here's a pretty kettle of fish! Kitty has arrived, and *one* Mr. Harshaw. Where *the* Mr. Harshaw is, *quien sabe!* It's awfully late. Poor Kitty has gone to bed, and has cried herself to sleep, I dare say, if sleep she can. I never have heard of a girl being treated so.

Tom and the other Mr. Harshaw are smoking in the dining-room, and Tom is talking endlessly — what about I can't imagine, unless he is giving this young record-breaker his opinion of his extraordinary conduct. But I must begin at the beginning.

Mrs. Percifer wired us from New York the day the bride-elect started, and *she* was to wire us from Ogden, which she did. I went to the train to meet her, and I told Tom to be on the watch for the bridegroom, who would come in from his ranch on the Snake River, by wagon or on horseback, across country from Ten Mile. To come by rail he 'd have had to go round a hundred miles or so, by Mountain Home. An American would have done it, of course, and have come in with her on the train; but the Percifers plainly expected no such wild burst of enthusiasm from him.

The train was late. I walked and walked

the platform; some of the people who were waiting went away, but I dared not leave my post. I fell to watching a spurt of dust away off across the river toward the mesa. It rolled up fast, and presently I saw a man on horseback; then I did n't see him; then he had crossed the bridge and was pounding down the track-side toward the depot. He pulled up and spoke to a trainman, and after that he walked his horse as if he was satisfied.

This is Harshaw, I thought, and a very pretty fellow, but not in the least like an Idaho legislator. I can't say that I care for the sort of Englishman who is so prompt to swear allegiance to our flag; they never do unless they want to go in for government land, or politics, or something that has nothing to do with any flag. But this youngster looked ridiculously young. I simply knew he was coming for that girl, and that he had no ulterior motives whatever. He was ashy-white with dust — hair, eyebrows, eyelashes, and his fair little mustache all powdered with it; his corduroys, leggings, and hat all of a color. I saw no baggage, and I wondered what he expected to be married in. He leaned on his horse dizzily a moment when he first got out of the

saddle, and the poor beast stretched his fore legs, and rocked with the gusts of his panting, his sides going in and out like a pair of bellows. The young fellow handed him over to a man to take to the stables, and I saw him give him a regular bridegroom's tip. He 's all right, I said to myself, and Tom *was* horrid to call him a "chump." He beat himself off a bit, and went in and talked to the ticket-agent. They looked at their watches.

"I don't think you 'll have time to go uptown," said the ticket-man.

Harshaw came out then, and *he* began to walk the platform, and to stare down the track toward Nampa; so I sat down. Presently he stopped, and raised his hat, and asked if I was Mrs. Daly, a friend of Mrs. Percifer of London and New York.

Not to be boastful, I said that I knew Mrs. Percifer.

"Then," said he, "we are here on the same errand, I think."

I was there to meet Miss Kitty Comyn, I told him, and he said so was he, and might he have a little talk with me? He seemed excited and serious, very.

"Are you *the* Mr. Harshaw?" I asked,

though I had n't an idea, of course, that he could be anybody else.

"Not exactly," he said. "I 'm his cousin, Cecil Harshaw."

"Is Mr. Harshaw ill?"

He looked foolish, and dropped his eyes. "No," said he. "He was well last night when I left him at the ranch." Last night! He had come a hundred miles between dark of one day and noon of the next!

"Your cousin takes a royal way of bringing home his bride — by proxy," I said.

"Ah, but it 's partly my fault, you know" — he could not quell a sudden shamefaced laugh, — "if you 'd kindly allow me to explain. I shall have to be quite brutally frank; but Mrs. Percifer said" — Here he lugged in a propitiatory compliment, which sounded no more like Mrs. Percifer than it fitted me; but mistaking my smile of irony for one of encouragement, he babbled on. I wish I could do justice to his "charmin'" accent and his perfectly unstudied manner of speech, a mixture of British and American colloquialisms, not to say slang.

"It 's like this, Mrs. Daly. A man ought n't to be a dog-in-the-manger about a girl, even

if he has got her promise, you know. If he can't get a move on and marry her before her hair is gray, he ought to step out and give the other fellows a chance. I'm not speaking for myself, though I would have spoken three years ago if she had n't been engaged to Micky — she 's always been engaged to him, one may say. And I accepted the fact; and when I came over here and took a share in Micky's ranch I meant right by him, and God knows I meant more than right by her. Was n't it right to suppose she must be tremendously fond of him, to let him keep her on the string the way he has? They 've been engaged four years now. And was it any wonder I was mad with Micky, seeing how he was loafing along, fooling his money away, not looking ahead and denying himself as a man ought who 's got a nice girl waiting for him? I'm quite frank, you see; but when you hear what an ass I 've made of myself, you 'll not begrudge me the few excuses I have to offer. All I tried to do was to give Micky a leg to help him over his natural difficulty — laziness, you know. He 's not a bad sort at all, only he 's slow, and it 's hard to get him to look things square in the face. It was

for her sake, supposing her happiness was bound up in him, that I undertook to boom the marriage a bit. But Micky won't boom worth a ——. He 's back on my hands now, and what in Heaven's name I 'm to say to her" — His eloquence failed him here, and he came down to the level of ordinary conversation, with the remark, "It 's a facer, by Jove!"

I managed not to smile. If he 'd undertaken, I said, to "boom" his cousin's marriage to a girl he liked himself, he ought at least to get credit for disinterestedness; but so few good acts were ever rewarded in this world! I seemed to have heard that it was not very comfortable, though it might be heroic, to put one 's hand between the tree and the bark.

"Ah," he said feelingly, "it 's fierce! I never was so rattled in my life. But before you give me too much credit for disinterestedness, you know, I must tell you that I 'm thinking of — that — in short, I 've a mind to speak for myself now, if Micky does n't come up to time."

I simply looked at him, and he blushed, but went on more explicitly. "He could have

married her, Mrs. Daly, any time these three years if he 'd had the pluck to think so. He 'd say, 'If we have a good season with the horses, I 'll send for her in the fall.' We 'd have our usual season, and then he 'd say, 'It won't do, Cecy.' And in the spring we are always as poor as jack-rabbits, and so he 'd wait till the next fall. I got so mad with his infernal coolness, and the contrast of how things were and how she must think they were! Still, I knew he 'd be good to her if he had her here, and he 'd save twice as much with her to provide for as he ever could alone. I used to hear all her little news, poor girl. She had lost her father, and there were tight times at home. The next word was that she was going for a governess. Then I said, 'You ought to go over and get her, or else send for her sharp. You are as ready to marry her now as ever you will be.'

"'I 'm too confounded strapped,' said he. I told him I would fix all that if he would go, or write her to come. But the weeks went by, and he never made a move. And there were reasons, Mrs. Daly, why it was best that any one who cared for him should be on the ground. Then I made my kick. I don't be-

lieve in kicking, as a rule; but if you do kick, kick hard, I say. 'If you don't send for her, Micky, I'll send for her myself,' I said.

"'What for?' said he.

"'For you,' said I, 'if you'll have the manliness to step up and claim her, and treat her as you ought. If not, she can see how things are, and maybe she'll want a change. You may not think you are wronging her and deceiving her,' I said, 'but that's what you are; and if you won't make an end of this situation' (I haven't told you, and I can't tell you, the whole of it, Mrs. Daly), 'I will end it myself — for your sake and for her sake and for my own.' And I warned him that I should have a word to say to her if he didn't occupy the field of vision quite promptly after she arrived. 'One of us will meet her at the train,' said I, 'and the one who loves her will get there first.'

"Well, I'm here, and he was cooking himself a big supper when I left him at the ranch. It was a simple test, Mrs. Daly. If he scorned to abide by it, he might at least have written and put her on her guard, for he knew I was not bluffing. He pawed up the ground a bit, but he never did a thing. Then

I cabled her just the question, Would she come? and she answered directly that she would. So I wired her the money. I signed myself Harshaw, and I told Micky what I 'd done.

"And whether he is sulking over my interference, I can't say, but from that moment he has never opened his mouth to me on the subject. I have n't a blessed notion what he means to do; judging by what he has done, nothing, I should say. But it may be he 's only waiting to give me the full strength of the situation, seeing it 's one of my own contriving. There 's a sort of rum justice in it; but think of his daring to insult her so, for the sake of punishing me!

"Now, what am I to say to her, Mrs. Daly? Am I to make a clean breast of it, and let her know the true and peculiar state of the case, including the fact that I 'm in love with her myself? Or would you let that wait, and try to smooth things over for Micky, and get her to give him another chance? There was no sign of his moving last night; still, he may get here yet."

The young man's spirits seemed to be rising as he neared the end of his tale, perhaps

because he could see that it looked pretty black for "Micky."

"If one could only know what he does mean to do, it would be simpler, would n't it?"

I agreed that it would. Then I made the only suggestion it occurred to me to offer in the case — that he should go to his hotel and get his luncheon or breakfast, for I doubted if he 'd had any, and leave me to meet Miss Comyn, and say to her whatever a kind Providence might inspire me with. My husband would call for him and fetch him up to dinner, I said; and after dinner, if Mr. Michael Harshaw had not arrived, or sent some satisfactory message, he could cast himself into the breach.

"And I 'm sorry for you," I said; "for I don't think you will have an easy time of it."

"She can't do worse than hate me, Mrs. Daly; and that 's better than sending me friendly little messages in her letters to Micky."

I wish I could give you this story in his own words, or any idea of his extraordinary, joyous naturalness, and his air of preposterous good faith — as if he had done the only

thing conceivable in the case. It was as convincing as a scene in comic opera.

"By the way," said he, "I didn't encumber myself with much luggage this trip. I have nothing but the clothes I stand in."

I made a reckless offer of my husband's evening things, which he as recklessly accepted, not knowing if he could get into them; but I thought he did not look so badly as he was, in his sun-faded corduroys, the whole of him from head to foot as pale as a plaster cast with dust, except his bright blue eyes, which had hard, dark circles around them.

"The train is coming," I warned him.

"*She* is coming! *À la bonne heure!*" he cried, and was off on a run, and whistled a car that was going up Main Street to the natatorium; and I knew that in ten minutes he would be reveling in the plunge, while I should be making the best of this beautiful crisis of his inventing to Miss Comyn.

My dear, they are the prettiest pair! Providence, no doubt, designed them for each other, if he had not made this unpardonable break. She has a spirit of her own, has Miss Kitty, and if she cried up-stairs alone with

me, — tears of anger and mortification, it struck me, rather than of heart-grief, — I will venture she shed no tears before him.

As Mr. Michael Harshaw did not arrive, we gave Mr. Cecil his opportunity, as promised, of speech with his victim and judge. He talked to her in the little sitting-room after dinner — as long as she would listen to him, apparently. We heard her come flying out with a sort of passionate suddenness, as if she had literally run away from his words. But he had followed her, and for an instant I saw them together in the hall. His poor young face was literally burning; perhaps it was only sunburn, but I fancied she had been giving him a metaphorical drubbing — "ragging," as Tom would call it — worse than Lady Anne gave Richard.

She was still in a fine Shakespearean temper when I carried her off up-stairs. Reserves were impossible between us; her right to any privacy in her own affairs had been given away from the start; that was one of the pleasing features of the situation.

"*Marry* him! marry *him!*" she cried. "That impertinent, meddlesome boy! That false, dishonorable" —

"Go slow, dear," I said. "I don't think he 's quite so bad as that."

"And what do I want with *him!* And what do you think he tells me, Mrs. Daly? And whether there 's any truth in him, how do I know? He declares it was not Michael Harshaw who sent for me at all! The message, all the messages, were from him. In that case I have been decoyed over here to marry a man who not only never asked me to come, but who stood by and let me be hoaxed in this shameful way, and now leaves me to be persecuted by this one's ridiculous offers of marriage, — as if I belonged to all or any of the Harshaws, whichever one came first! Michael may not even know that I am here," she added in a lower key. "If Cecil Harshaw was capable of doing what he has done, by his own confession, it would be little more to intercept my answers to his forgeries."

That was true, I said. It was quite possible the young man lied. She would, of course, give Mr. Michael Harshaw a chance to tell *his* story.

"I cannot believe," said the distracted girl, "that Michael would lend himself, even passively, to such an abominable trick. Could any one believe it — of his worst enemy!"

Impossible, I agreed. She must believe nothing till she had heard from her lover.

"But if Michael did not know it," she mused, with a piteous blush, "then Cecil Harshaw must have sent me that money himself — the insolence! And after that to ask me to marry him!"

Men were fearfully primitive still, after all that we had done for them, I reminded her, especially in their notions of love-making. Their intentions were generally better than their methods. No great harm had been done, for that matter. A letter, if written that night, would reach Mr. Michael Harshaw at his ranch not later than the next night. All these troubles could wait till the real Mr. Harshaw had been heard from. My husband would see that her letter reached him promptly, and in the mean time Mr. Cecil need not be told that we were proving his little story.

I was forced to humor her own theory of her case; but I have no idea, myself, that Cecil Harshaw has not told the truth. He does not look like a liar, to begin with, and how silly to palm off an invention for to-day which to-morrow would expose!

Tom is still talking and talking. I really

must interfere and give Mr. Cecil a chance to go. It is quite too late to look for the other one. If he comes at this hour, there is nothing he can do but go to bed.

. . . Well, the young man has gone, and Tom is shutting up the house, and I hope the bride is asleep, though I doubt it. Have I told you how charming she is? Not so discouragingly tall or so classic as the Du Maurier goddess, but "comfy," much more "comfy," to my mind. Her nose is rudimentary, rather, which does n't prevent her having a mind of her own, though noses are said to have it all to say as to force of character. Her upper lip has the most fascinating little pout; her chin is full and emotional — but these are emotional times; and there is a beautiful finish about her throat and hands and wrists. She looks more dressed in a shirt-waist, in which she came down to dinner, her trunk not having come, than some of us do in the best we have. Her clothes are very fresh and recent, to a woman of Idaho; but she does not wear her pretty ears "cachées," I am glad to say. They are very pretty, and one — the left one — is burned pure crimson from sitting next the window of her section all the way from Omaha.

But why do I write all this nonsense at twelve o'clock at night, when all I need say by way of description is that we want her to stay with us, indefinitely if necessary, and let her countrymen and lovers go to — their ranch on the Snake River!

What do you suppose those wretches were arguing about in the dining-room last night, over their whisky and soda? Sentiment was "not in it," as they would say. They were talking up a scheme — a scheme that Tom has had in mind ever since he first saw the Thousand Springs six years ago, when he had the Snake River placer-mining fever. It was of no use then, because electrical transmission was in its infancy, its long-distance capacities undreamed of. But Harshaw was down there fishing last summer, and he was able to satisfy the only doubt Tom has had as to some natural feature of the scheme — I don't know what; but Harshaw has settled it, and is as wild as Tom himself about the thing. Also he wants to put into it all the money he can recover out of his cousin's ranch. (I should n't think the future of that partnership would be exactly happy!) And now they propose to take hold of it together, and at once.

Harshaw, who, it seems, is enough of an engineer to run a level, will go down with Tom and make the preliminary surveys. Tom will work up the plans and estimates, and prepare a report, which Harshaw will take to London, where his father has influence in the City, and the sanguine child sees himself placing it in the twinkling of an eye.

Tom made no secret with me of their scheme, and I fell upon him at once.

"You are not taking advantage of that innocent in your own house!" I said.

"Do you take him for an innocent? He has about as shrewd a business head — but he has no money, anyhow. I shall have to put up for the whole trip."

To be honest, that was just what I had feared; but it did n't sound well to say so. Tom is always putting up for things that never come to anything — for us.

He tried to propitiate me with the news that I was to go with them.

"And what do you propose to do with our guest?"

"Take her along. Why not? It 's as hard a trip as any I know of, for the distance. Her troubles won't keep her awake, nor spoil her appetite, after the first day's ride."

"I don't know but you are right," I said; "but wild horses could n't drag her if *he* goes. And how about the other Harshaw — the one she has promised to marry?"

"She is n't going to marry him, is she? I should think she had gone about far enough, to meet that fellow halfway."

Even if she was n't going to marry him, I said, it might be civil to tell him so. She had listened to his accuser; she could hardly refuse to listen to him.

"I think, myself, the dear boy has skipped the country," said Tom, who is unblushingly on Cecil's side. "If he has n't, the letter will fetch him. She will have time to settle his hash before we start."

"Before we start! And when do you propose to start?" — I should n't have been surprised if he had said "to-morrow," but he considerately gives me until Thursday.

The truth is, Lou, it is years and years since I have been on one of these wild-goose chases with Tom. I have no more faith in this goose than in any of the other ones, but who wants to be forever playing the part of Wisdom "that cries in the streets and no man regards her"? One might as well be merry over one's

folly, to say nothing of the folly of other people. I confess I am dying to go ; but of course nothing can be decided till the recreant bridegroom has been heard from.

This morning, when I went to Kitty's door for her letter, I found she had n't written it. She made me come in while she " confessed," as she said.

" I could n't submit to the facts last night," she faltered. " I had to pretend that I thought he did n't know ; but of course he does — he must. I wrote him from home before I started, and again from New York. I can't suppose that Cecil would intercept my letters. He is not a stage villain. No ; I must face the truth. But how can I ever tell it to mamma ! "

" We will arrange all that by and by," I assured her (but I don't see myself how she can tell the truth about this transaction to anybody, her mother least of all, who would be simply wild if she knew how the girl has been betrayed and insulted, among utter strangers) ; meantime I begged her to promise me that she would not waste —

She interrupted me quickly. " I have wasted enough, I think. No ; don't be afraid for me, Mrs. Daly, and for Heaven's sake don't pity me ! "

I had just written the above when Tom came in and informed me that the "regular candidate had arrived," and requested to know if we were to have them both to dinner, or if the "dark horse" was to be told he need n't come.

"Of course he can't come!" I screamed; "let him keep himself as dark as possible."

"Then you need n't expect me," said Tom. "Cecy and I will dine at the Louvre." And I would give a good deal if I could dine there too, or any where but with this extraordinary pair of lovers.

I went out to meet the real Harshaw, embarrassed with the guilty consciousness of having allowed my sympathies to go astray; for though in theory I totally disapprove of Cecil Harshaw, personally I defy anybody not to like him. I will except prejudiced persons, like his cousin and the lady he is so bent on making, by hook or by crook, *a* Mrs. Harshaw.

Mr. Harshaw the first (and last to arrive) has shaved his mustache quite recently, I should say, and the nakedness of his upper lip is not becoming. I wonder if she ever saw him with his mouth bare? I wonder if she would have accepted him if she had? He was

so funny about his cousin, the promoter; so absolutely unconscious of his own asinine position. He argued very sensibly that if, after waiting four years for him, she could n't wait one day longer, she must have changed in her feelings very decidedly, and that was a fact it behooved him to find out. Better now than later. I think he has found out.

Possibly he was nicer four years ago. Men get terribly down at heel, mentally, morally, and mannerly, poking off by themselves in these out-of-the-way places. But she has been seeing people and steadily making growth since she gave him her promise at eighteen. The promise itself has helped to develop her. It must have been a knot of perpetual doubt and self-questioning. No one need tell me that she really loves him; if she did, if she had, she could not take his treatment of her like this. Perhaps the family circumstances constrained her. They may have thought Harshaw had a fortune in the future of his ranch, with its river boundary of placer-mines. English girls are obedient, and English mammas are practical, we read.

She is practical, and she is beginning to look her situation in the face.

"I shall want you to help me find some way to return that money," she said to me later, with an angry blush — "that money which Cecil Harshaw kindly advanced me for my journey. I shall hate every moment of my life till that debt is paid. But for the insult I never can repay him, never!

"We are a large family at home — four girls besides me, and three boys; and boys are so expensive. I cannot ask mamma to help me; indeed, I was hoping to help her. I should have gone for a governess if I had not been duped into coming over here. Would there be any one in this town, do you think, who might want a governess for her children? I have a few 'accomplishments,' and though I 've not been trained for a teacher, I am used to children, and they like me, when I want them to."

I thought this a good idea for the future; it would take time to work it up. But for the present an inspiration came to me, — on the strength of something Tom had said, — that he wished I could draw or paint, because he could make an artist useful on this trip, he condescended to say, if he could lay his hand on one. All the photographs of the Springs, it seems, have the disastrous effect of dwarfing

their height and magnitude. There is a lagoon and a weedy island directly beneath them, and in the camera pictures taken from in front, the reeds and willows look gigantic in the foreground, and the Springs — out of all proportion — insignificant. This would be fatal to our schemers' claims as to the volume of water they are supposed to furnish for an electrical power plant to supply the Silver City mines, one hundred miles away. Hence the demand of Science for Art, with her point of view.

"Just the thing for her," I thought. "She can draw and water-color, of course; all English girls do." And I flew and proposed it to Tom. "Pay her well for her pictures, and she 'll make your Thousand Springs look like Ten Thousand." (That was only my little joke, dear; I am always afraid of your conscience.) But the main thing is settled; we have found a way of inducing Kitty to go. Tom was charmed with my intelligence, and Kitty, poor child, would go anywhere, in any conceivable company, to get even with Cecil Harshaw on that hateful money transaction. When I told her she would have to submit to his presence on the trip, she shrugged her shoulders.

"It 's one of 'life 's little ironies,' " she said.

"And," I added, "we shall have to pass the ranch that was to have been" —

"Oh, well, that is another. I must get used to the humorous side of my situation. One suffers most, perhaps, through thinking how other people will think one suffers. If they would only give one credit for a little common sense, to say nothing of pride!"

You see, she will wear no willows for him. We shall get on beautifully, I've no doubt, even with the "irony" of the situation rubbed in, as it inevitably will be, in the course of this journey.

Tom solemnly assures me that the other Harshaw's name is not Micky, but "Denis;" and he explains his having got into the legislature (quite unnecessarily, so far as I am concerned) on the theory that he is too lazy even to make enemies.

I shall get the governess project started, so it can be working while we are away. If you know of anybody who would be likely to want her, and could pay her decently, and would know how to treat a nursery governess who is every bit a lady, but who is not above her business (I take for granted she is not, though of course I don't know), do, pray, speak

a word for her. I'll answer for it she is bright enough; better not mention that she is pretty. There must be a hundred chances for her there to one in Idaho. We are hardly up to the resident-governess idea as yet. It is thought to be wanting in public spirit for parents not to patronize the local schools. If they are not good enough for the rich families, the poor families feel injured, and want to know the reason why.

To return to these Harshaws. Does it not strike you that the English are more original, not to say queer, than we are; more indifferent to the opinions of others — certain others? They don't hesitate to do a thing because on the face of it it's perfectly insane. Witness the lengths they go, these young fellows out here, for anything on earth they happen to set their crazy hearts upon. The young fancy bloods, I mean, who have the love of sport developed through generations of tough old hard-riding, high-playing, deep-drinking ancestors; the "younger sons," who have inherited the sense of having the ball at their feet, without having inherited the ball. They are certainly great fun, but I should hate to be responsible for them.

I note what you say about my tendency to slang, and how it "seems to grow upon me." It "seems" to, alas! for the simple reason, I fear, that it does. I can remember when I used carefully to corral all my slang words in apologetic quote-marks, as if they were range-cattle to be fenced out from the home herd — our mother-tongue which we brought with us from the East, and which you have preserved in all its conscientious purity. But I give it up. I hardly know any longer, in regard to my own speech, which are my native expressions and which are the wild and woolly ones adopted off the range. It will serve all human purposes of a woman irretrievably married into the West. If the worst come to the worst, I can make a virtue of necessity and become a member of the "American Dialect Society" — a member in good standing.

This is the morning of our glorious start. I am snatching a few words with you while the men are packing the wagon, which stands before the door. What a sensation it would make drawn up in front of — Mrs. Percifer's, for instance, in Park Avenue! Here no one turns the head to look at it.

I told Tom he need make no concessions to the fact that he is to have two fairly well-dressed women along. We will go as they go, without any fuss, or they may leave us at home. I despise those condescending, make-believe-rough-it trips, with which men flatter women into thinking themselves genuine campaigners. Consequently our outfit is a big, bony ranch-team and a Shuttler wagon with the double-sides in ; spring seats, of course, and the bottom well bedded down with tents and rolls of blankets. We don't go out of our way to be uncomfortable; that is the tenderfoot's pet weakness. The " kitchen-box " and the " grub-box " sit shoulder to shoulder in the back of the wagon. The stovepipe, tied with rope in sections, keeps up a lively clatter in concert with the jiggling of the tinware and the thumps and bumps of the camp-stove, which has swallowed its own feet, and, by the internal sounds, does n't seem to have digested them.

I spent last evening covering the canteens with canvas. The maiden was quite cheerful, sorting her drawing-materials and packing her colors and sketch-blocks. She laughs at everything Tom says, whether she sees the point or not, and most when there is none to see.

Tom will be cook, because he prefers his own messing to any of ours, and we can't spare room in the wagon for a regular camp chef. Mr. Harshaw is the "swamper," because he makes himself useful doing things my lord does n't like to do. And Kitty is not Miss Co-myn, as we called it, but Miss "Cummin," as they call it, — "the Comin' woman," Tom calls her. Mr. Billings, the teamster, completes our party.

Sept. —— Never mind the date. This is to-morrow morning, and we are at Walter's Ferry. It seems a week since we left Bisuka. We started yesterday on the flank of a dust-storm, and soon were with the main column, the wind pursuing us and hurling the sweepings of the road into the backs of our necks. The double-sides raised us out of the worst of the dust, else I think we should have been smothered. It was a test of our young lady's traveling manners. She kept her head down and her mouth shut; but when I shrieked at her to ask how she was standing it, she plucked her dusty veil from between her lips and smiled for answer.

We two have the back seat, Tom sits in

front with Billings, and the "swamper" sits anywhere on the lumps and bumps which our baggage makes, covered by the canvas wagon-sheet. He might have ridden his horse — everybody supposed he would; but that would have separated him from the object of his existence; the object sternly ignoring him, and riding for miles with her face turned away, her hand to her hat, which the wind persistently snatched at. It was her wide-brimmed sketching-hat — rather a daring creation but monstrously becoming, and I had persuaded her to wear it, the morning being delusively clear, thinking we were to have one of our midsummer scorchers that would have burned her fair English face to a blister.

Mr. Harshaw thought she would be tired, wearing her hand continually in the air, and suggested various mechanical substitutes, — a string attached to the hat-trimming, a scarf tied over her head; but a snubbing was all the reward he got for his sympathy.

"When this hand is tired I take the other one," she said airily.

We lunched at Ten Mile, by the railroad track. Do you remember that desolate place? The Oregon Short Line used to leave us there

at a little station called Kuna. There is no Kuna now; the station-house is gone; the station-keeper's little children are buried between four stakes on the bare hill — diphtheria, I think it was. Miss Kitty asked what the stakes were there for. Tom did n't like to tell her, so he said some traveler had made a "cache" there of something he could n't carry with him, and the stakes were to mark the spot till his return.

"And will nobody disturb the cache?" asked Miss Kitty. I could n't bear to hear them. "They are graves," I whispered. "Two little children — the station-keeper's — all they had." And she asked no more questions.

Mr. Harshaw had got possession of the canteen, and so was able to serve the maiden, both when she drank and when she held out her rosy fingers to be sprinkled, he tilting a little water on them slowly — with such provoking slowness that she chid him; then he let it come in gulps, and she chid him more, for spattering her shoes. She could play my Lady Disdain very prettily, only she is something too much in earnest at present for the game to be a pretty one to watch. I feel like calling her down from her pedestal of virgin wrath, if

only for the sake of us peaceful old folk, who don't care to be made the stamping-ground for their little differences.

The horses were longer at their lunch than we, and Miss Kitty requested her traveling-bag. "And now," she said, "I will get rid of this fiend of a hat," whereas she had steadily protested for miles that she did n't mind it in the least. She took out of her bag a steamer-cap, and when she had put it on I could see that poor Harshaw dared not trust himself to look at her, her fair face exposed, and so very fair, in its tender, soft coloring, against that grim, wind-beaten waste of dust and sage.

I shall skip the scenery on the road to Walter's Ferry, partly because we could n't see it for the dust; and if we had seen it, I would not waste it upon you, an army woman. But Walter's Ferry was a hard-looking place when we crawled in last night out of the howling, dirt-throwing wind.

The little hand-raised poplars about the ferry-house were shivering and tugging and straining their thin necks in the gale, the windows so loaded with dust that we could barely see if there were lights inside. We hooted and we howled, — the men did, — and the

ferry-keeper came out and stared at us in blank amazement that we should be wanting supper and beds. As if we could have wanted anything else at that place except to cross the river, which we don't do. We go up on this side. We came down the hill merely to sleep at the ferry-house, the night being too bad for a road camp.

The one guest-room at the Ferry that could be called private was given to Kitty and me; but we used it as a sitting-room till bedtime, there being nowhere else to go but into the common room where the teamsters congregate.

We stood and looked at each other, in our common disguise of dust, and tried to find our feet and other members that came awake gradually after the long stupor of the ride. There was a heap of sage-brush on the hearth laid ready for lighting. I touched a match to it, and Kitty dropped on her knees in front of its riotous warmth and glow. Suddenly she sprang up and stared about her, sniffing and catching her breath. I had noticed it too; it fairly took one by the throat, the gruesome odor.

"What is this beastly smell?" She spoke right out, as our beloved English do. Tom

came in at that moment, and she turned upon him as though he were the author of our misery.

"What *has* happened in this horrid room? We can't stay here, you know!" The proposition admitted of no argument. She refused to draw another breath except through her pocket-handkerchief.

By this time I had recognized the smell. "It 's nothing but sage-brush," I cried; "the cleanest, sterilest thing that grows!"

"It may be clean," said Kitty, "but it smells like the bottomless pit. I must have a breath of fresh air." The only window in the room was a four-pane sash fixed solid in the top of the outside door. Tom said we should have the sweepings of the Snake River valley in there in one second if we opened that door. But we did, and the wind played havoc with our fire, and half the country blew in, as he had said, and with it came Cecil, his head bent low, his arms full of rugs and dust-cloaks.

"You angel!" I cried, "have you been shaking those things?"

"He 's given himself the hay-fever," said Tom, heartlessly watching him while he sneezed and sneezed, and wept dust into his handkerchief.

"Does n't the man do those things?" Miss Kitty whispered.

"What, our next Populist governor? Not much!" Tom replied. Kitty of course did not understand; it was hopeless to begin upon that theme — of our labor aristocracy; so we sent the men away, and made ourselves as presentable as we could for supper.

I need not dwell upon it; it was the usual Walter's Ferry supper. The little woman who cooked it — the third she had cooked that evening — served it as well, plodding back and forth from the kitchen stove to the dining-room table, a little white-headed toddler clinging to her skirts, and whining to be put to bed. Out of regard for her look of general discouragement we ate what we could of the food without yielding to the temptation to joke about it, which was a cross to Tom at least.

"Do you know how the farmers sow their seed in the Snake River valley?" he asked Miss Kitty. She raised eyes of confiding inquiry to his face.

"They prepare the land in the usual way; then they go about five miles to windward of the ploughed field and let fly their seed; the wind does the rest. It would be of no use,

you see, to sow it on the spot where it 's meant to lie; they would have to go into the next county to look for their crop, top-soil and all."

Now whenever Tom makes a statement Miss Kitty looks first at me to see how I am taking it.

It is a fair, pale morning, as still as a picture, after last night's orgy of wind and dust. The maiden is making her first sketch on American soil — of the rope-ferry, with the boat on this side. She is seated in perfect unconsciousness on an inverted pine box — empty, I trust — which bears the startling announcement, in legible lettering on its side, that it holds "500 smokeless nitro-powder cartridges." Now she looks up disgusted, to see the boat swing off and slowly warp over to the other side. The picturesque blocks and cables in the foreground have hopelessly changed position, and continue changing; but she consoles herself by making marginal notes of the passengers returning by the boat, — a six-horse freight-team from Silver City, and a band of horses driven by two realistic cow-boys from anywhere. The driver of the freight-team has a young wildcat aboard, half starved, haggard,

and crazed with captivity. He stops, and pulls out his wretched pet. The cow-boys stop; everybody stops; they make a ring, while the dogs of the ferry-house are invited to step up and examine for themselves. The little cat spits and rages at the end of its blood-stained rope. It is not a pretty show, and I am provoked with our men for not turning their backs upon it.

Sunday, at Broadlands. From Walter's Ferry, day before yesterday, we climbed back upon the main road, which crosses the plateau of the Snake, cutting off a great bend of the river, to see it again far below in the bottom of the Grand Cañon.

The alkali growth is monotonous here; but there was a world of beauty and caprice in the forms of the seed-pods dried upon their stalks. Most of these pretty little purses were empty. Their treasure went, like the savings of a maiden aunt, when the idle wind got hold of it. There is an almost humorous ingenuity in the pains Nature has taken to secure the propagation of some of the meanest of her plant-children. The most worthless little vagabond seeds have wings or fans to fly with, or self-

acting bomb-receptacles that burst and empty their contents (which nobody wants) upon the liberal air, or claws or prickers to catch on with to anything that goes. And once they have caught on, they are harder to get rid of than a Canadian "quarter."

"And do you call this a desert?" cries Miss Kitty. "Why, millions of creatures live here! Look at the footprints of all the little beasties. They must eat and drink."

"That is the cheek of us humans," said Tom. "We call our forests solitudes because *we* have never shown up there before. Precious little we were missed. This desert subsisted its own population, and asked no favors of irrigation, till man came and overstocked it, and upset its domestic economies. When the sheep-men and the cattle-men came with their foreign mouths to fill, the wild natives had to scatter and forage for food, and trot back and forth to the river for drink. They have to travel miles now to one they went before. Hence all these desert thoroughfares."

And he showed us in the dust the track of a lizard, a kangaroo-mouse, and a horned toad. We could see for ourselves Bre'r Jack-rabbit and Sis' Gopher skipping away in the grease-

wood. The horses and cattle had their own broad-beaten roads converging from far away toward an occasional break in the cañon wall, where the thirsty tracks went down.

We plodded along, and having with much deliberation taken the wrong road, we found ourselves about nightfall at the bottom of the cañon, in a perfect cul-de-sac. The bluffs ahead of us crowded close to the river, stretching their rocky knees straight down into deep water, and making no lap at all for our wagon to go over. And now, with this sweet prospect before us, it came on steadily to rain. The men made camp in the slippery darkness, while we sat in the wagon, warm and dry, and thanked our stars there were still a few things left that men could do without our aid or competition. Presently a lantern flashed out, and spots of light shifted over them as they slaved — pounding tent-pegs, and scraping stones away from places where our blankets were to be spread, hacking and hewing among the wet willows, and grappling with stovepipes and tent-poles; and the harder they worked the better their spirits seemed to be.

"I wish some of the people who used to know Cecil Harshaw in England could see him now," said Kitty.

"What did he do in England?" I asked.

"He did n't hammer stovepipes and carry kitchen-boxes and cut fire-wood, you know."

"Don't you like to see men use their muscle?" I asked her. "Very few of them are reflective to any purpose at his age."

"Why, how old, or how young, do you take him to be?"

"I think you spoke of him as a boy, if I remember."

"If I called him a boy, it was out of charity for his behavior. He 's within six months of my own age."

"And you don't call yourself a girl any longer!" I laughed.

"It 's always 'girls' and 'men,'" she said. "If Cecil Harshaw is not a man now, he never will be."

I did n't know, I said, what the point at issue was between us. *I* thought Cecil Harshaw was very much a man, as men go, and I saw nothing, frankly, so very far amiss with his behavior.

"It 's very kind of you, Mrs. Daly, to defend him, I am sure. I suppose he could do no less than propose to me, after he had brought me out to marry a man who did n't

appear to be quite ready; and if it had to be done, it was best to do it quickly."

So *that* was what she had been threshing out between whiles? I might have tried to answer her, but now the little tent among the willows began to glow with fire and candle-light, and a dark shape loomed against it. It was Cecil Harshaw, bareheaded, with an umbrella, coming to escort us in to supper.

I never saw such a pair of roses as Kitty wore in her cheeks that night, nor the girl herself in such a gale. Tom gave me a triumphant glance across the table, as if to say, See how the medicine works! It was either the beginning of the cure, or else it was a feverish reaction.

I shall have to hurry over our little incidents: how the wagon could n't go on by way of the shore, and had to flounder back over the rocks, and crawl out of the cañon to the upper road; how Kitty and I set out vaingloriously to walk to Broadlands by the river-trail, and Harshaw set out to walk with us; and how Kitty made it difficult for him to walk with both of us by staving on ahead, with the step of a young Atalanta. I was so provoked with her that I let her take her pace

and I took mine. Fancy a woman of my age racing a girl of her build and constitution seven miles to Broadlands! Poor Harshaw was cruelly torn between us, but he manfully stuck to his duty. He would not abandon the old lady even for the pleasure of running after the young one, though I absolved him many times, and implored him to leave me to my fate. I take pride in recording his faithfulness, and I see now why I have always liked him. He wears well, particularly when things are most harassing.

It certainly was hard upon him when I gave out completely, toiling through the sand, and sat down to rest on the door-stone of a placer-miner's cabin (cabin closed and miner gone), and nowhere through the hot, morning stillness could we catch a sound or a sight of the runaway. I could almost hear his heart beat, and his eyes and ears and all his keen young senses were on a stretch after that ridiculous girl. But he kept up a show of interest in my remarks, and paid every patient attention to my feeble wants, without an idea of how long it might be my pleasure to sit there. It was not long, however it may have seemed to him, before we heard wagon-wheels booming down

a little side-cañon between the hills. The team had managed to drag the wagon up through a scrubby gulch that looked like no thoroughfare, but which opened into a very fair way out of our difficulties.

When we had come within sight of Broadlands Ferry, all aboard except Kitty, and still not a sign nor a sound of her, our hearts began to soften toward that willful girl.

Tom requested Harshaw to jump out and see if he could n't round up his countrywoman. But Harshaw rather haughtily resigned — in favor of a better man, he said. Then Tom stood up in the wagon and gave the camp call, "Yee-ee-ip! yee-ip, ye-ip!" a brazen, barbarous hoot. Kitty clapped both hands to her ears when she was first introduced to it, but it did not fetch her now. Tom "yee-iped" again, and as we listened there she was, strolling toward us through the greasewood, with the face of a May morning! She would n't give us the satisfaction of seeing her run, but her flushed cheeks, damp temples, and quick, sighing breath betrayed her. She *had* been running fast enough.

"Kitty," I said severely, "there are rattlesnakes among those rocks."

"Are there?" she answered serenely. "But I was n't looking for rattlesnakes, you know. See what lovely things I did find! I 've got the 'prospecting' fever already."

She had filled her pockets with specimens of obsidian, jaspers, and chalcedonies, of colors most beautiful, with a deep-dyed opaqueness, a shell-fracture, and a satiny polish like jade. And she consulted us about them very prettily — the little fraud! Of course she was instantly forgiven.

But I notice that since our arrival at Broadlands, Harshaw has not troubled her with his attentions. They might be the most indifferent strangers, for all that his manner implies. And if she is not pleased with the change, she ought to be, for she has made her wishes plain.

II

Camp at the Thousand Springs. A little grass peninsula running out between the river and a narrow lagoon, a part of Decker's ranch, two miles by water below the Springs and half a mile from Decker's Ferry, set all about with a hedge of rose, willow, and wild-currant bushes,

sword-grass, and tall reeds, — the grasses enormous, like Japanese decorations, — crossing the darks of the opposite shore and the lights of the river and sky. Our tents are pitched, our blankets spread in the sun, our wagon is soaking its tired feet in the river. Tom and Harshaw are up-stream somewhere, fishing for supper. Billings is bargaining with Old Man Decker for the "keep" of his team. Kitty and I are enjoying ourselves. There is a rip in one of the back seams of my jacket, Kitty tells me, but even that cannot move me.

I say we are enjoying ourselves; but my young guest has developed a new mood of late which gives poignancy to my growing tenderness for the girl. She has kept up wonderfully, with the aid of her bit of a temper, for which I like her none the less. How she will stand this idleness, monotony, and intimacy, with the accent of beauty pressing home, I cannot say. I rather fear for her.

The screws have been tightened on her lately by something that befell at the Harshaw ranch. Our road lay past the place, and Harshaw had to stop for his surveying instruments, also to pack a bag, he said, — with apologies for keeping us waiting.

I think we were all a little nervous as we neared the house. Very few women could have spelled the word "home" out of those rough masculine premises. I wondered if Kitty was not offering up a prayer of thanksgiving for the life she had been delivered from.

Harshaw jumped down, and, stooping under the wire fence, ran across the alfalfa stubble to the house as fast as he could for the welcome of a beautiful young setter dog — Maisie he called her — that came wildly out to meet him. A woman — not a nice-looking woman — stood at the door and watched him, and even at our distance from them there was something strange in their recognition.

Kitty began to talk and laugh with forced coolness. Tom turned the horses sharply, so that the wagon's shadow lay on the roadside, away from the house. "Get out, had n't you better?" he suggested, in the tone of a command. We got out, and Kitty asked for her sketching-bag.

"Kitty," I whispered, pointing to the house, "draw *that*, and send it to your mother. She will never ask again why you did n't care to live there."

"That has nothing to do with it," she

retorted coldly. "I would have lived there, or anywhere, with the right person."

There was no such person. I could n't help saying it.

She is very handsome when she looks down, proud and a trifle sullen when you "touch her on the raw," as the men say.

"But there *is* such a person, Kitty," I ventured. I had ventured, it seemed, too far.

"You are my hostess. Your house is my only home. Don't be his accomplice!" I thought it rather well said.

Now that woman's clothes were hanging on the line (and very common-looking clothes they were), so she could not have been a casual guest. Moreover, she was pacing the hard ground in front of the house, and staring at us with a truculent yet uneasy air. Curiosity was strong, and a sort of anger possessed me against the place and everybody connected with it.

When Cecil came out, looking very hot and confused for him, who is always so fresh and gay, I inquired, rather shortly perhaps, "Who is your visitor?"

"I have no visitor," he answered me, as cool as you please. But there was a protest in

his eye. I was determined not to spare him or any of the Harshaws.

"Your housekeeper, then?"

"I have no housekeeper."

"Who is the lady stopping at your house?"

"I have no house."

"Your cousin's house, then?"

"If you refer to the person I was talking to — she is my cousin's housekeeper, I suppose."

Tom gave me a look, and I thought it time to let the subject drop. This was in Kitty's presence, though apparently she neither saw nor heard. I walked on ahead of the wagon, so angry that I was almost sick. Instantly Harshaw joined me, with a much nicer, brighter look upon his face.

"Mrs. Daly," he said, "I want to beg your pardon. I could not answer your question before Miss Comyn. The lady, as you were pleased to call her, is Mrs. Harshaw, *my cousin* — Micky's wife, you understand."

"Since when?"

"Day before yesterday, she tells me. They were married at Bliss."

"Well, I should say it was 'Bliss' for Kitty Comyn that *she* is not Mrs. Harshaw — too,"

I was about to add, but that would be going rather far. "And what did you want to bring that girl over here for?"

"Mrs. Daly, I have told you, — I thought she loved him."

"And what of his love for her?"

"Good heavens! you don't suppose Micky cares for that old thing he has married! *That* was what I was trying to save him from. He 'd have had to be the deuce of a lot worse than he is to deserve that."

Had it occurred to him, I put it to Cecil Harshaw, to ask himself what the saving of his precious cousin might have cost the girl who was to have been offered up to that end?

"You leave out one small feature of the case," said Harshaw, with a sick and burning look that made me drop my eyes, old woman as I am. "I love her myself so well that, by Heaven! if she had wanted Micky or any other man, she should have had him, if that was what her heart was set upon. But I did n't believe it was. I wanted her to know the truth, and, hang it! I could n't write it to her. I could n't peach on Micky; but I wanted to smash things. I wanted something to happen. Maybe I did n't do the right thing, but I had to do something."

I could n't tell him just what I thought of him at that moment, but I did say to him that he had some very simple ideas for an end-of-the-century young Englishman. At which he smiled sweetly, and said it was one of his simple ideas that Kitty need not be informed who or what her successor was, or how promptly she had been succeeded.

"But just now you said you wanted her to know the truth."

"Not the whole truth. Great Scott! she knows enough. No need to rub it in."

"She knows just enough about this to misunderstand, perhaps. In justice to yourself — she heard you beating about the bush — do you want her to misunderstand you?"

"Oh, hang me! I don't expect her to understand me, or even tolerate me, yet. Mine is a waiting race, Mrs. Daly."

"Very well; you can wait," I said. "But news like this will not wait. She will be obliged to hear it; you don't know how or where she may hear it. Better let her hear it first in as decent a way as possible."

"But there is no decent way. How can I explain to you, or you to her, such a measly affair as this? It began with a question of

money he owed that woman on the ranch. He bought it of her, — and a cruel bad bargain it was, — and he never could make his last payment. She has threatened him, and played the fool with him when he 'd let her, and bored him no end. His governor would have helped him out; but, you see, Micky has been a rather expensive boy, and he has given the old gentleman to understand that the place is paid for, — to account for money sent him at various times for that ostensible purpose, — and on that basis the bargain was struck, between our governors, for my interest in the ranch. My father bought me in, on a clear title, as Uncle George represented it, in perfect good faith. I 've never said a word, on the old gentleman's account; and Micky has never dared undeceive his father, who is the soul of honor in business, as in everything else. I am sorry to bore you with family affairs; but it 's rather rum the way Micky's fate has caught up with him, through his one weakness of laziness, and perhaps lying a little, when he was obliged to. How this affair came about so suddenly I can't say. Did n't like to ask her too many questions; and Micky, poor devil, faded from view directly he saw us coming. But at a venture: she had

heard he was going to be married, and came down here to make trouble when he should arrive with his bride; but he came back alone, disgusted with life, and found her here. It was easier to marry her than — pay her, we 'll say. She has been something over-generous, perhaps. She would rather have had him, any time, than her money, and now was the time. She took advantage of a weak moment."

"A weak and a spiteful moment," I kindly added. "Now if he hastens the news to England, and the Percifers hear of it in New York, how pleasant for Kitty to have all her friends hear that *he* is married and *she* is not!"

"Great Heavens!" said the young fellow, "if she would let me hasten the news — that she is married to me!"

"Why don't you appeal to her pride and her spirit now while they are in the dust? Why do you bother with sentiment now?"

I liked him so much at that moment that I would have had him have Kitty, no matter what way he got her.

"Yes," he said; "why not take advantage of her, as everybody else has done?"

"Some people's scrupulousness comes rather late," I said.

"To those who don't understand," he had the brazenness to say. "What is done is done. It 's a rough beginning — awfully rough on her. The end must atone somehow. If I don't win her I shall be punished enough; but if I do, it will be because she loves me. And pray God" — He stopped, with that look. It is a number of years since a young man has looked at me in that way, but a woman does not forget.

It was rather difficult telling to Kitty the story of her old lover's marriage, as I took it on myself to do. Not that she winced perceptibly; but I fear she has taken the thing home, and is dwelling on it — certain features of it — in a way that can do no good. From a word she lets slip now and then, I gather that she is brooding over that fancy of hers that Cecil Harshaw offered himself by way of reparation, as she was falling between two stools, — her own home and her lover's, — to save her from the ground. As since that rainy night in the wagon she has never distinctly referred to this theory of his conduct, I have no excuse for bringing it up, even to attack it. In fact, I dare not; she is in too complicated a mood. And, after all, why

should I want her to marry either of them? Why should the "hungry generations" tread her down? She is nice enough to stay as she is.

Another thing happened on our way here which may perversely have helped to confirm her in this pretty notion of Harshaw's disinterestedness.

At a place by the river where the current is bad (there are many such places, and, in fact, the whole of the Snake River is a perfect hoodoo) Harshaw stopped one day to drink. The wagon had struck a streak of heavy sand, and we were all walking. We stood and watched him, because he drank with such deep enjoyment, stooping bareheaded on his hands and knees, and putting his hot face to the water. Suddenly he made a clutch at his breast pocket: his Norfolk jacket was unbuttoned. He had lost something, and the river had got it. He ran along the bank, trying to recover it with a stick, and, not succeeding, he plopped in just as he was, with his boots on. We saw him drop into deep water and swim for it, a little black object, which he caught, and held in his teeth. Then he turned his face to the shore; and precious near he

came to never reaching it! We women had been looking on, smiling, like idiot dolls, till we saw Tom racing down the bank, throwing off his coat as he ran. Then we took a sort of dumb fright, and tried to follow; but it was all over in a second, before we saw it, still less realized it — his struggle, swimming for dear life, and not gaining an inch; the stick held out to him in the nick of time, just as he passed a spot where the beast of a current that had him swooped inshore.

I am sorry to say that my husband's first words to the man he may be said to have saved from death were, "You young fool, what did you do that for?"

"For this," Harshaw panted, slapping his wet breast.

"For a pocket-book! Great Sign! What had you in it? I would n't have done that for the whole of the Snake River valley."

"Nor I," laughed Harshaw.

"Nor the Bruneau to boot."

"Nor I."

"What did you do it for, then?"

"For this," Harshaw repeated.

"For a piece of pasteboard with a girl's face on it, or some such toy, I 'll be sworn!"

Harshaw did not deny the soft impeachment.

"I did n't know you had a girl, Harshaw," Tom began seductively.

"Well, I have n't, you know," said Harshaw. "There was one I wanted badly enough, a few years ago," he added with engaging frankness.

"When was it you first began to pine for her? About the period of second dentition?"

"Oh, betimes; and betimes I was disappointed."

"Well, unless it was for the girl herself, I 'd keep out of that Snake River," my husband advised.

Kitty's face wore a slightly strained expression of perfect vacancy.

"Do *you* know who Harshaw's 'girl' was?" I asked her the other night, as we were undressing,—without an idea that she would n't see where the joke came in. She was standing, with her hair down, between the canvas curtains of our tent. It looks straight out toward the Sand Springs Fall, and Kitty worships there awhile every night before she goes to bed.

"No," she said. "I was never much with

Cecil Harshaw. It is the families that have always known each other." The simple child! She had n't understood him, or would she not understand? Which was it? I can't make out whether she is really simple or not. She is too clever to be so very simple; yet the cleverness of a young girl's mind, centred on a few ideas, is mainly in spots. But now I think she has brought this incident to bear upon that precious theory of hers, that Harshaw offered himself from a sense of duty. Great good may it do her!

The Sand Springs Fall, a perfect gem, is directly opposite our camp, facing west across the lagoon. We can feast our eyes upon it at all hours of the day and night. Tom has told Kitty, in the way of business, that he has no use for that fall. She may draw it or not, as she likes. She does draw it; she draws it, and water-colors it, and chalks it in colored crayons, and India-inks it, loading on the Chinese white; and she charcoals it, in moonlight effects, on a gray-blue paper. But do it whatever way she will, she never can do it.

"Oh, you exquisite, hopeless thing! Why can't I let you alone!" she cries; "and why can't you let *me* alone!"

"It is rather hard, the way the thing doubles up on you," says Tom. "The real fall, right side up, is bad enough; but when it comes to the reflection of it, standing on its head in the lagoon, I should lie right down myself. I would n't pull another pound."

("*Lay* down," he said; but I thought you would n't stand it. Tom would never spoil a cherished bit of dialect because of shocking anybody with his grammar.)

Kitty throws herself back in the dry salt-grass with which the whole of our little peninsula is bedded. The willows and brakes are our curtains, through which the rising moon looks in at us, and the setting sun; the sun rises long before we see him, above the dark-blue mountains beyond the shore.

"Won't somebody repeat

'There is sweet music here that softlier lies?'"

Kitty asks, letting her eyelashes fall on her sun-flushed cheeks. Her face, as I saw it, sitting behind her in the grass, was so pretty — upside down like the reflection of the waterfall, its colors all the more wonderfully blended.

We did not all speak at once. Then Harshaw

said, to break the silence, "I will read it to you, if you don't mind."

"Oh, have you the book?" Kitty asked in surprise.

He went to his tent and returned with *a* book, and sitting on the grass where she could hear but could not see him, he began. I trembled for him; but before he had got to the second stanza I was relieved: he could read aloud.

"Now *there* is a man one could live on a Snake River ranch with," I felt like saying to Kitty. Not that I am sure that I want her to.

When he had finished,

"O rest ye, brother mariners; we will not wander more!"

Tom remarked, after a suitable silence, that it was all well enough for Harshaw, who would be in London in six weeks, to say, "We will not wander more!" But how about the rest of us?

Kitty sat straight up at that.

"Will Mr. Harshaw be in London six weeks from now?" The question was almost a cry.

"Will you?" she demanded, turning upon him as if this was the last injury he could do her.

"I suppose so," he said.

"And you will see my mother, and all of them?"

"I think so — if you wish."

She rose up, as if she could bear no more. Harshaw waited an instant, and then followed her; but she motioned him back, and went away to have it out with herself alone.

I took up the book Harshaw had left on the grass. It was "Copp's Manual" — "For the use of Prospectors," etc.

After all, it is not so sure that Harshaw will go to London. There has been an engineer on the ground since last summer, when all this water was free. He has located a vast deal of it, perhaps the whole. Tom says he can hold only just as much as he can use; I hope there will be no difference of opinion on that point. There generally is a difference of opinion on points of location when the thing located is proved to have any value. The prior locator has gone East, they tell us at the ranch, on a business visit, presumably to raise capital for his scheme; which, as I understand it, is to force the water of the springs up on the dry plains above, for irrigation (the fetich of the

country), by means of a pneumatic pumping arrangement. His ladders and pipes, and all his hopeful apparatus, are clinging now like cobwebs to the face of the bluff, against that flashing, creaming broadside of the springs at their greatest height and fall. I was pitying the poor man and his folly, but Tom says the plan is perfectly feasible.

The wall of the river cañon is built up in stories of basalt rock, each story defined by a horizontal fissure, out of which these mysterious waters gush, white and cold, taking glorious colors in the sunlight from the rich underpainting of the rock. There is an awfulness about it, too, as if that sheer front of rock were the retaining-wall of a reservoir as deep as the bluffs are high, which had sprung a leak in a thousand places, and might the next instant burst and ingulf the lagoon, and wipe out the pretty island between itself and the river. Winter and summer the volume of water never varies, and the rate of discharge is always the same, and the water is never cold, though I have just said it is. It looks cold until the rocks warm it with their gemlike tints, like a bride's jewels gleaming through her veil. Back of the bluffs, where it might be supposed to

come from, there is nothing for a hundred miles but drought and desert plains. I don't care for any of their theories concerning its source. It is better as it is — the miracle of the smitten rock.

You can fancy what wild presumption it must seem that a mere man should think to reverse those torrents and make them climb the bluff or cram them into an iron pipe and send them like paid laborers to hoist and pump and grind, and light the streets at Silver City, a hundred miles away. And how the cataracts will shout while these two pigmies compare their rival claims to ownership — in a force that with one stroke could lay them as flat as last year's leaves in the bottom of a mill-race!

The particular fall my schemer has located for his own — other claims to be discussed hereafter — is called the "Snow Bank." He says he does n't want the earth: this one cataract is enough for him. To look at the whole frontage of the springs and listen to their roar, one would think there might be water enough for them both, poor children! Hardly what you 'd call two bites of a cherry!

If the springs were the half of a broken diamond bracelet, the Snow Bank would be

its brightest gem, lying separate in the case — perhaps the one that was the clasp. It is half hidden by the shoulder of a great barren bluff which, at a certain angle of the sun, throws a blue shadow over it. At other times the fall is almost too bright in its foaming whiteness for the eye to endure.

Kitty is painting it with this shadow half across it; but the light shines upon it at its source. Tom is doubtful if she is showing the fall to the best advantage for his purpose, but he is obliging enough to let the artist try it in her own way first.

"Go up there," she says, "and stand at the head of the spring, if you want to show by comparison how big it is, or how small you are."

He goes, and gets in position, and Kitty makes some pencil-marks on the margin of her sketch. Then she waves her hands to tell him, across the shouting current, that she is done with him. She has been so quick that he thinks he must have mistaken her gesture. Then Harshaw makes the train-conductor's signal for the train to move on.

"You see," she says to Harshaw and me, who are looking over her shoulder, "*that*

would be the size of him in my sketch." She points to the marginal pencil-mark, which is not longer than the nib of a stub-pen. "I can't make a little black dot like that look like a man."

"In this particular sketch, for his purpose, he 'd rather look like a dot than a man, I dare say," said Harshaw.

"Well, shall I put him in? I can make a note of it on the margin: 'This black dot is Mr. Daly, standing at the spring-head. He is six feet'" —

"But he is n't, you know," Harshaw says. "He 's five feet ten — if he 's that."

"Ten and a half," I hasten to amend.

Our lunch that day had been left in the boat. We went down and ate it under the mountain birches at a spot where the Snow Bank empties into the lagoon — not *our* lagoon, as we called it, between our camp and the lovely Sand Springs Fall, but the upper one, made by the springs themselves, before their waters reach the river. In front of us, half embraced by the lagoon and half by the river, lay a little island-ranch of about ten acres, not cut up in crops, but all over green in pasture. A small cabin, propping up a

large hop-vine, showed against a mass of birch and cottonwood on the river side of the island.

"What a place for a honeymoon!" said I.

"There is material there for half of a honeymoon," said Tom — "not bad material, either."

"Oh, yes," I said; "we have seen her — that is, we have seen her sunbonnet."

"Kitty, you've got a rival," I exclaimed: for there in the sunny centre of the island, planted with obvious design right in front of the Snow Bank, *our* Snow Bank, was an artist's big white umbrella.

"Why should I not have, in a place like this?" she said. "If the schemers arrive by twos, why not two of my modest craft? *We* shall leave it as we find it; we don't intend to carry it away in our pockets." She stopped, and blushed disdainfully. "I forgot," she murmured, "my own mercenary designs."

"I have not heard of these mercenary designs of yours. What are they, may I ask?" Harshaw had turned on his side on the grass, and half rose on one elbow as he looked at her.

"That is strange," mocked Kitty, with supreme coldness. "You have always been so interested in my affairs!"

"I always shall be," he replied seriously, with supreme gentleness.

"I ought to be so grateful."

"But unfortunately you are not."

"I should be grateful — if you would move a little farther to the right, if you please. That young person in the pink sunbonnet is coming down to water her horses again."

Harshaw calmly took himself out of her way altogether, lighted his pipe, and went down close to the water, and sat there on a stone, and presently, as we could hear, entered into easy conversation with the pink sunbonnet, the face of which leaned toward him over the pony's neck as he stooped to drink. The splashed waters became still, and softly the whole picture — pink sunbonnet, clay-bank pony, pale and shivery willows, and deep blue sky — developed on the negative of the clear lagoon.

There was no use in saying how pretty it was, so we resorted to the other note, of disparagement. I remarked that I should not think a pink sunbonnet would be ravishingly becoming to the average Snake River complexion, as I had seen it.

"*That* sunbonnet is becoming, you bet!"

Tom remarked. "Wait till you see the face inside it."

"Have you seen it?"

"Quite frequently. Do you think Harshaw would sit there talking with her, as he does by the hour, if that sunbonnet was not becoming?"

"As he does by the hour! And why have we not heard of her before?" I requested to be told.

"Business, my dear. She is a feature of the scheme — quite an important one. She represents the hitch which is sure to develop early in the history of every live enterprise."

"Indeed?" I said. And if Harshaw talked with her on business, I did n't see what his talking had to do with the face inside her bonnet.

"I don't say that it 's always on business," Tom threw in significantly.

"Who is the lady in the pink sunbonnet, and what is your business with her?" I demanded.

"I question the propriety of speaking of her in just that tone," said Tom, "inasmuch as she happens to be a lady — somewhat off the conventional lines. She waters her own stock

and milks her own cow, because the old Indian girl who lives with her is laid up at present with a fever. Her father was an artist — one of the great unappreciated" —

"So that was her father painting the Snow Bank?" I interrupted.

"Her father is dead, my dear, as you would have learned if you had listened to my story. But he lived here a good many years before he died. He had made a queer marriage, old man Decker tells me, and quarreled with the world on account of it. He came here with his disputed bride. She was somebody else's wife first, I believe, and there was a trifling informality about the matrimonial exchange; but it came out all right. They both died, and a sweeter, fresher little thing than the daughter! Adamant, though — bed-rock, so far as we are concerned."

"What do you want that belongs to her?" I asked. "Her island, perhaps?"

"Only right of way across it. But 'that 's a detail.' She is the owner of something else we do want — this piece of ground," — he looked about him and waved his hand, — "and all this above us, where our power-plant must stand. And our business is to per-

suade her to sign the lease, or, if she won't lease, to sell it when we are ready to buy. We have to make sure of that piece of ground. This place is so confoundedly cut up with scenery and nonsense, there 's not a spot available for our plant but this. We 'll bridge the lagoon and make a landing on that point of birches over there."

"You will! And do you suppose she will sign a lease to empower you to wipe her off the face of the earth — abolish her and her pretty island at one fell swoop?"

"She knows nothing yet about our designs upon her toy island. We have n't approached her on that. We could manage without it at a pinch."

"So good of you!" I murmured.

"But we can't manage without a place to put our power-house."

"She 'll have to sign her own death-warrant, of course. If you get a footing for your power-house you 'll want the island next. I never heard of such grasping profanation."

"Well, if Cecy could see his way to fall in love with her, — I would n't ask him to woo her in cold blood, — it would be a monstrous convenient way to settle it."

"Why do you say such things before her?" I asked Tom when we were alone. "They are not pretty things to say, in the first place."

"Have you noticed how she is always snubbing him? I thought it time somebody should try the counter-snub. He 's not solely dependent for the joys of life on the crumbs of her society."

"Do you suppose she cares whom he talks to, or whom he spends his time with?"

"Perhaps she does n't care. I should like to give her a chance to see if she cares, that 's all."

Tom's location notice being plain for all eyes to read, the mistress of the island naturally inquired what he wanted with the Snow Bank; and he, thinking she would see at once the value to her ranch of such a neighboring enterprise, frankly told her of his scheme. Nothing of its scientific interest, its difficulties, its commercial value, even its benefit to herself, appealed to the little islander. To her it was simply an attempt to alter and ruin the spot she loved best on earth; to steal her beautiful waterfall and carry it away in an ugly iron pipe. Whether the thing could be done, she did not ask herself; the design was

enough. Never would she lend herself, or anything that was hers, to such an impious desecration! This was her position, which any child might have taken in defense of a beloved toy; but she was holding it with all a woman's force and constancy.

I was glad of it, I said to Tom, and I hoped she would stand them off for all she was worth. But I am not really glad. What woman could love a waterfall better than her husband's success? There are hundreds of waterfalls in the world, but only this one scheme for Tom.

But anent this hitch, it teases me a little, I confess, on Kitty's account, when Cecil meanders over to the island at all hours of the day. To be sure, it relieves Kitty of his company; but is she so glad, after all, to be relieved?

It was last Friday, after one of Harshaw's entirely frank but perfectly unexplained absences, that he came into camp and inquired if there was any clam-broth left in the kitchen. I referred him to the cook. Finding there was, he returned to me and asked if he might take a tin of it to Miss Malcolm for her patient.

"Who is Miss Malcolm?" I asked. But

of course who could she be but the lady of the island, where he spends the greater part of his time? He was welcome to the clam-broth, or anything else he thought would be acceptable in that quarter, I said. And how was the patient?

"Oh, she's quite bad all the time. She does n't get about. I wonder if you 'd mind, Mrs. Daly, if I asked you to look in on her some day? The old creature 's in a sad way, it seems to me."

Of course I did n't mind, if Miss Malcolm did not. Harshaw seemed to feel authorized to assure me of that fact. So I went first with Tom, and then I went again alone, leaving Harshaw in the boat with Kitty.

Miss Malcolm's maid or man servant, or both — for she does the work of both, and looks in her bed (dressed in a flannel bed-sack, her head tied up in an old blue knitted "fascinator") less like a woman than anything I ever beheld —appears to have had a mild form of grippe fever, and having never been sick in her life before, she thought she was nearing her end. My simple treatment, the basis of which was quinine and whiskey, seemed to strike old Tamar favorably; and

after the second visit there was no need to come again to see her. But by this time I was deep in the good books of her mistress, who knows too little of illness herself to appreciate how little has been done, by me at least, or how very little needed to be done after restoring the old woman's confidence in her power to live. (The last time I saw her she still wore the blue fascinator, but with a man's hat on top of it; she was waddling toward the cow-corral with half a haystack, it looked like, poised on a hay-fork above her head. She was certainly a credit to her doctor, if not to her *corsétière*, she and the haystack being much of a figure.)

Miss Malcolm's innocent gratitude is most embarrassing, really painful, under the circumstances, and the poor child cannot let the circumstances alone. She imagines I am always thinking about Tom's scheme. It is evident that *she* is; and not being exactly a woman of the world, out of the fullness of her heart her mouth speaketh. That would be all right if she would speak to somebody else. *I* don't want to take advantage of her gratitude, as she seems determined I shall do.

"You must think me a very strained, senti-

mental creature," she said to me the last time, "to care so much for a few old rocks and a little piece of foamy water."

I did n't think so at all, I told her. If I had lived there all my life, I should feel about the place just as she did.

Here she began to blush and distress herself. "But think how kind you have all been to me! Mr. Harshaw was here every day, after he found how ill poor Tamar was. He did so many things: he lifted her, for one thing, and that I could n't have done to save her life. And your two visits have simply cured her! And here I am making myself a stumbling-block and ruining your husband's plans!"

I said he was quite capable of taking care of himself.

"Does your husband want *all* the water?" she persisted. "Do I understand that he must have it all?"

I supposed she was talking of the Snow Bank, and since she was determined we should discuss the affair in this social way, I said he would have to have a great deal; and I told her about the distance the power would have to be sent, and about the mines and the smelters, and all the rest of it, for it was no use to

belittle the scheme. I had got started unintentionally, and I saw by her face that I had made an impression. It is a small-featured, rather set, colorless face, not so pretty as Tom pretended, but very delicate and pure; but now it became suddenly the face of a fierce little bigot, and enthusiast to boot.

"It shall never go through, — not *that* scheme — not if" — Then she remembered to whom she was talking, and set her lips together, and two great shiny drops stood in her eyes.

"Don't, don't, you child!" I said. "Don't worry about their old scheme! If it must come it will come; but as a rule, a scheme, my dear, is the last thing that ever does go through. There 's plenty of time."

"But I can't give in," she said. "No; I *must* try to hinder it all I can. I will be honest with you. I like you all; of all the strangers who have come here I never liked any people better. But your husband — must *not* — set his heart on *all* that water! It does n't belong to him."

"Does it belong to you, dear?"

"The *sight* of it belongs to me," she said. "I will not have the place all littered up with

their pipes and power-plants. Look out there! Look at that! Has any one the right to come here and spoil such a lovely thing as that?" — This is what it is to be the daughter of an artist.

"And how about the other despoiler," I asked — "the young man with the pneumatic pipe?"

"The 'pneumatic pipe'!" she repeated.

"'Pump,' I mean. Is he to be allowed all over the place to do as *he* pleases? His scaling-ladders are littering up the bluffs — not that they incommode the bluffs any; but if I lived here, I should want to brush them away as I would sweep the cobwebs from my walls."

"I do not own the bluffs," she said in a distant, tremulous voice.

But the true answer to my question, as I surmise, was the sudden, helpless flush which rose, wave upon wave, covering her poor little face, blotting out all expression but that of painful girlish shame. Here, if I'm not mistaken, will be found the heart of the difficulty. Miss Malcolm's sympathies are evidently with compressed air rather than with electrical transmission. I shall tell Tom he need waste

no more arguments on her. Let him first compound with his rival of the pump.

I suppose there is just such a low, big moon as this looking in upon you where you sit, you little dot of a woman, lost in the piazza perspectives of the Coronado ; and you might think small things of our present habitation — a little tent among the bushes, with wind-blown weeds against the moon, shifting their shadow-patterns over our canvas walls. But you 'd not think small things of our Sand Springs Fall by night, that glimmers on the dark cliff opposite — cliff, and mist-like cataract, and the low moon throwing the shadow of the bluff across it, all repeated in the stiller, darker picture of the lagoon. I shall not inflict much of this sort of thing upon you ; but the senseless beauty of it all gives one a heartache. Why should it be here, where you and I shall never see it together — where I shall leave it soon, never to see it again ? Tom says we are coming back — when the great scheme is under way. Ah, the scheme, the scheme ! It looks very far away to-night, and so do some other schemes that I had set my heart on unaware, foolish old woman that I am. As if there was only

one way in this world for young men and women to be happy!

Harshaw brought me your sweet letter yesterday. It was stage-day, and he went up over the bluffs to the ferry mail-box at the cross-roads, where the road to Shoshone Falls branches from the road to Bliss.

I read to Kitty what you wrote me about the Garretts and their children, and the going to New York and then to Paris. (Thank you so much, dear, for your prompt interest in my little bride that is n't to be!) She had two letters of her own which she had read by herself, and afterward I thought she had been crying; but with her it is best not to press the note of sympathy. Neither does she like me to handle her affairs with gloves on, so to speak. So I plunged into the business in a matter-of-fact tone, and she replied in the same. Her objection is to going east to New York, and then to the other side. "I had rather stay in California," she said, "or anywhere in the West." Naturally; westward lies the way of escape from social complications.

She is afraid of the Percifers, and of meeting people she knows in Paris. But an offer like this was exceptional in this part of the

world, I reminded her. A nurse for the boy, a maid, and only two little girls of eight and ten on her hands; and such nice people as the Garretts, who have been all over the world!

"Well," she said, "I should certainly like to get away from here as soon as possible. From *here*, not from *you!*" she added, looking me in the face. Her eyes were full of tears. We clasped hands on that.

"What is it? Has anything else happened?" I asked; for I knew by her looks that something had.

"Oh, dear!" she sighed, "I should so like to take myself and my troubles seriously once in a while. No sooner do I try, but something perfectly farcical is sure to happen. If I tell you this, promise me you won't laugh. It's indecent for me to laugh; mamma would never forgive me. The old dear! I'm so fond of him!"

The "old dear," it seems, is Micky's father — a very superior sort of father for such a son to have, but accidents will happen in the best-regulated families. He is a gallant widower of fair estate, one of those splendid old club-men of London; a very expensive article of old gentleman, with fine old-fashioned

manners and morals, and a few stray impulses left, it would seem by what follows. According to the father's code, the son has not conducted himself in his engagement to Kitty Comyn as a gentleman should. Thereupon the head of the house goes to Miss Kitty's mother and makes the *amende honorable* by offering his hand and heart and fortune to his son's insulted bride! The mother is touched and pleased not a little by this prompt espousal of her daughter's cause; and having wiped away all tears from *her* eyes, this gallant old gentleman is coming over to America, for the first time in his life, to make his proposal to the bride herself! He is not so old, to get down to particulars; sixty-three does n't look so old to some of us as it does to Miss Kitty. He is in fine health, I doubt not, and magnificently preserved. Kitty's mother is not at all averse, as I gather, to this way of settling her child's difficulties. She rather pleadingly assures Kitty that Mr. Harshaw senior has solemnly sworn that this is no unpleasant duty he feels called on to perform; not only his honor, but his affections are profoundly enlisted in this proposal. Kitty has had for years a sacred place in his regard; and from thinking of her

as a daughter absolutely after his own heart, it is but a step to think of her in a still nearer — the nearest — relation. He begs her mother to prepare her for no perfunctory offer of marriage, but one that warms with every day's delay till he can take the dear child under his lifelong protection. Not to punish or to redress does he come, but to secure for himself and posterity a treasure which his son had trampled under foot. Somehow we did not feel like laughing, after all. Kitty, I think, is a little frightened. She cannot reach her mother, even with a cable dispatch, before this second champion will arrive.

"He 's an awfully grand old fellow, you know. I could never talk to him as I do to the boys. If he thinks it his duty to marry me, I don't know if I can help myself. Poor Uncle George ! I 've always called him 'uncle' like his own nieces, who are all my friends. I never thought that I should be 'poor-ing' Uncle George ! But he can't have heard yet of Micky's marriage. Fancy his going down to the ranch to stay with Micky and that woman ! And then for a girl like me to toss him aside, after such a journey and such kindness ! I don't know how I shall ever have courage to

do it. There are fine women in London who would jump at the chance of being Mrs. Harshaw — not Mrs. Micky, nor Mrs. Stephen, nor Mrs. Sidney, but *Mrs. Harshaw*, you understand?" I understood.

"And now," she said, producing the second letter, "you *will* laugh! And you may!"

The envelope contained a notification, in due form, of the arrival from New York, charges not paid, of some five hundred pounds of second-class freight consigned to Mrs. Harshaw, Harshaw's ranch, Glenn's Ferry (via Bisuka).

"These things belong to me," said Kitty. "They cost me the last bit of money I had that was my own. Mrs. Percifer, who is so clever at managing, persuaded me I should need them directly on the ranch — curtains and rugs and china, and heaven knows what! She nearly killed me, dragging me about those enormous New York shops. She said it would be far and away cheaper and better to buy them there. I did n't mind about anything, I was so scared and homesick; I did whatever she said. She saw to getting them off, I suppose. That must have been her idea, directing them to Mrs. Harshaw. She thought there

would be no Kitty Comyn, no *me*, when these got here. And there is n't; *this* is not the Kitty Comyn who left England — six weeks, is it? — or six years ago!"

"How did the letter reach you?" I asked. We examined the envelope. It bore the postmark, not of Bisuka, but of Glenn's Ferry, which is the nearest post-office to the Harshaw ranch. Micky's wife had doubtless opened the letter, and Micky, perceiving where the error lay, had reinclosed, but some one else had directed it — the postmaster, probably, at his request — to Kitty, at our camp. That was rather a nice little touch in Micky, that last about the direction.

"Come, he is honest, at the least," I said, "whether Mrs. Micky would have scrupled or not. She could claim the things if she chose."

"She is quite welcome," said Kitty. "I don't know what in the world I shall do with them. There 'll be boxes and bales and barrels — enough to bury me and all my troubles. I might build me a funeral pyre!"

We fell into each other's arms and screamed with laughter.

"Kitty, we 'll have an auction," I cried. "There 's nothing succeeds like an auction

out here. We 'll sell the things at boom prices — we 'll sell everything."

"But the bride," said Kitty; "you will have to keep the bride." And without a moment's warning, from laughing till she wept, she began to weep in earnest. I have n't seen her cry so since she came to us, not even that miserable first night. She struggled with herself, and seemed dreadfully ashamed, and angry with me that I should have seen her cry. Did she suppose I thought she was crying because she was n't going to be a bride, after all?

"Oh, Mrs. Daly, I feel so ill!" were Kitty's first words to me when I woke this morning. I looked her over and questioned her, and concluded that a sleepless night, with not very pleasant thoughts for company, might be held responsible for a good share of her wretchedness.

"What were you lying awake about? Your new champion, Uncle George?" I asked her.

She owned that it was. "Don't you see, Mrs. Daly, mamma does n't leave room for the possibility of my refusing him. And if I do refuse him, he 'll simply take me back to

England, and then, between him and mamma, and all of them, I don't know what may happen."

"Kitty," I said, "no girl who has just escaped from one unhappy engagement is going to walk straight into another with her eyes wide open. I won't believe you could be so foolish as that."

"You don't understand," she said, "what the pressure will be at home — in all love and kindness, of course. And you don't know Uncle George. He is so sure that I need him, he'll force me to take him. He'll take me back to England in any case."

"And would you not like to go, Kitty?"

"Ah, wouldn't I! But not in that way."

She sat up in her flannel camp-gown, and began to braid up her loosened hair.

"Kitty," I commanded, "lie down. You are not to get up till luncheon."

"I have a plan," she said, "and I must see Cecil Harshaw; he must help me carry it out. There is no one else who can."

"You have all day to see him in."

"Not all day, Mrs. Daly. He must be ready to start to-morrow. Uncle George will reach Bisuka on the fifteenth, not later. Cecil

must meet him there ; first, to prepare him for Micky's new arrangement, and second, to persuade him that he does not owe me an offer of marriage in consequence. Cecil will know how to manage it ; he must know ! I will not have any more of the Harshaws offering themselves as substitutes. It will be very strange if I cannot exist without them somehow."

It struck me that the poor child's boast was a little premature, as she seemed to be making rather free use of one of the substitutes still, as a shield against the others ; but it was of a piece with the rest of the comedy. I kept her in bed till she had had a cup of tea ; afterward she slept a little, and about noon she dressed herself and gave Cecil his audience. But first, at her request, I had possessed him with the main facts and given him an inkling of what was expected of him. His face changed ; he looked as he did after his steeplechase the day I saw him first, — except that he was cleaner, — grave, excited, and resolved. He had taken the bit in his teeth. When substitute meets substitute in a cause like this ! I would have left them to have their little talk by themselves, but Kitty signified peremptorily that she wished

me to stay, with a flushed, appealing look that softened the nervous tension of her manner.

"I would do anything on earth for you, Kitty," Cecil said most gently and fervently; "but don't ask me to give advice — to Uncle George of all men — on a question of this kind — unless you will allow me to be perfectly frank."

"It 's a family question," said Kitty, ignoring his proviso.

"I think it would get to be a personal question very soon between Uncle George and me. No; I meddled in one family question not very long ago."

"It 's very strange," said Kitty restlessly, "if you can't help me out of this in some way. I cannot be so disrespectful to him, the dear old gentleman! He ought not to be put in such a position, or I either. How would you like it if it were your father?"

Cecil reddened handsomely at this home thrust. "I 'd have a deuce of a time to stop him if he took the notion, you know; it 's not exactly a son's or a nephew's business. There is only one way in which I can help you, Kitty. You must know that."

He had struck a different key, and his face was all one blush to correspond with the new note in his voice. I think I never saw a manlier, more generous warmth of ardor and humility, or listened to words so simply uttered in such telling tones.

"What way is that?" asked Kitty coldly.

"Forgive me! I could tell him that you are engaged to me."

"That would be a nice way — to tell him a falsehood! I should hope I had been humiliated enough" —

She snatched her handkerchief from her belt and pressed it to her burning face. I rose again to go. "Sit still, pray!" she murmured.

"It need not be a falsehood, Kitty. Let it be anything you like. You may trust me not to take advantage. A nominal engagement, if you choose, just to meet this exigency; or" —

"That would be cheating," cried Kitty.

"The cheat would bear a little harder on me than on any one else, I think."

"You are too good!" Kitty smiled disdainfully. "First you offer yourself to me as a cure, and now as a preventive."

"Kitty, I think you ought at least to take him seriously," I remonstrated.

"By all that 's sacred, you 'll find it 's serious with me!" Cecil ejaculated.

"Since when?" retorted Kitty. "How many weeks ago is it that I came out here by your contrivance to marry your cousin? Is that the way a man shows his seriousness? You sacrificed more to marry me to Micky than some men would to win a girl themselves."

"I did, and for that very reason," said Cecil.

"I should like to see you prove it!"

"Kitty, excuse me," I interrupted. "*I* should like to ask Mr. Harshaw one question, if he does not mind. Do you happen to have that picture about you, Mr. Harshaw?"

I thought I was looking at him very kindly, not at all like an inquisitor, but his face was set and stern. I doubt if he perceived or looked for my intention.

"'That picture,' Mrs. Daly?" he repeated.

"The photograph of a young lady that you jumped into the river to save — don't you remember?"

Cecil smiled slightly, and glanced at Kitty. "Did I say it was a photograph of a lady?"

"No; you did not. But do you deny that it was?"

"Certainly not, Mrs. Daly. I have the picture with me; I always have it."

"And do you think *that* looks like seriousness? To be making such protestations to one girl with the portrait of another in your coat pocket? We have none of us forgotten, I think, that little conversation by the river."

He saw my meaning now, and thanked me with a radiant look. "Here is the picture, Mrs. Daly. Whose portrait did you think it was? Surely *you* might have known, Kitty! This is the girl I wanted years ago and have wanted ever since; but she belonged to another man, and the man was my friend. I tried to save that man from insulting her and dishonoring himself, because I thought she loved him. Or, if he could n't be saved, I wanted to expose him and save her. And I risked my own honor to do it, and a great fool I was for my pains. But this is the last time I shall make a fool of myself for your sake, Kitty."

I rose now in earnest, and I would not be stayed. In point of fact, nobody tried to stay me. Kitty was looking at her own face with eyes as dim as the little water-stained photo-

graph she held. And Cecil was on his knees beside her, whispering, "I stole it from Micky's room at the ranch. That was no place for it, anyhow. May I not have one of my own, Kitty?"

I think he will get one — of his own Kitty.

Our rival schemer, Mr. Norman Fleet, has arrived, and electrical transmission has shaken hands with compressed air. The millennium must be on the way, for never did two men want so nearly the same thing, and yet agree to take each what the other does not need.

Mr. Fleet does not "want the earth," either, nor all the waters thereof; but the most astonishing thing is, he does n't want the Snow Bank! He not only does n't want it himself, but is perfectly willing that Tom should have it. In fact, do what we will, it seems to be impossible for us to tread on the tail of that young man's coat. But having heard a little bird whisper that he is in love, and successfully so, I am not so surprised at his amiability. Neither am I altogether unprepared, if the little bird's whisper be true, for the fact that Miss Malcolm is becoming reconciled to Tom's designs upon her beloved scenery. For the sake

of consistency, and that pure devotion to the Beautiful, so rare in this sordid age, I could have wished that she had not weakened so suddenly; but for Tom's sake I am very glad. She is clay in the hands of the potter, now that she knows my husband does not want "all the water," and that his success does not mean the failure of Mr. Norman Fleet.

Harshaw will take the Snow Bank scheme when he takes Kitty back to London. If he promotes it, I tell Tom, after the fashion in which he "boomed" Kitty's marriage to his cousin, we 're not likely to see either him or the Snow Bank again. But "Harshaw is all right," Tom says; and I believe that the luck is with him.

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